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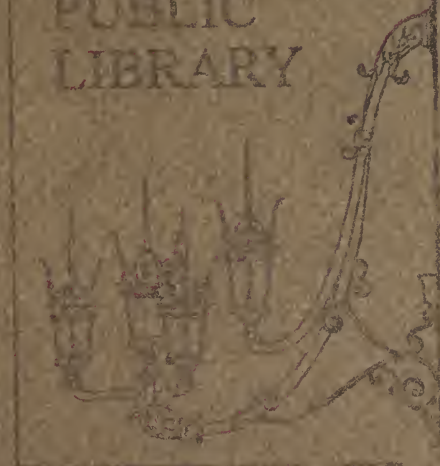
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In the Midst of Plenty

A Profile of
Boston and Its Poor



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A Program Paper of the Boston Persistent Poverty Project



In the Midst of Plenty

A Profile of
Boston and Its Poor



*An in-depth study
focusing on the working age
population of Boston*

December, 1989



THE BOSTON FOUNDATION
Persistent Poverty Project
60 State Street, 6th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02109

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Preface

Nearly four years ago, the Boston Foundation launched the Poverty Impact Program, a ten million dollar initiative designed to mobilize new resources, build new alliances, and spur new activity on behalf of the poor. This commitment arose from our deep belief that, at a time of sustained growth and prosperity in Boston and Massachusetts, the persistence of serious poverty in our city was both unnecessary and unacceptable.

The Rockefeller Foundation has recently provided us with additional resources to explore these questions. Along with Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, San Antonio, and Washington, D.C., Boston is participating in a long-term project to devise national strategies from local efforts.

With our work here in Boston, we seek to generate a body of locally-based information on urban poverty and the persistently poor; to build, focus, and energize community attention on the problem; and to develop and implement effective local policies, systems, and programs that will strengthen the community's capacity to address the issues of persistent poverty over the long term.

Unfortunately, we release this report in a very different economic climate from that in which we began our work. We began by asking, "How far have we come since 1980"; we must now ask, within the context of the current budget crisis, whether we have the public will to make the hard choices to create solutions to persistent poverty.

In the following pages, you will learn of a Boston more prosperous than the Boston of 1980, yet still painfully divided. You will learn about Boston's poor population of some 71,500 people; the isolation in which they live, the predominance of women, and the unacceptable number of children growing up in poverty. You will also discover that the poor are capable people, that they are working, raising families, and that all are a part of our community.

This publication is the first of a series that will provide information about the dimensions and characteristics of poverty in Boston, including supplements to this report on Boston's Hispanic and Asian populations and Boston neighborhoods. It is our hope that readers will find this information constructive and meaningful. We welcome your reactions and comments.

It has been our pleasure to work with Paul Osterman, who guided this research from its inception. A gifted social scientist, Dr. Osterman is currently a professor at the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. We appreciate his experience, insight, and skill in translating questions into survey instruments and the results into useful information.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the nearly 17,000 participants who worked, so patiently, with the research team. We appreciate their willingness to share their private lives. They will be the judge of how well we, as a community, make use of the insights they have provided for the benefit of Boston.



Anna Faith Jones
President, The Boston Foundation

Notes from the Chief Investigator

These comments are designed to provide general information about how the survey was conducted and how the results are presented in this report. Those who need more detail may find the appendix on survey methodology or the glossary useful.

The data in this report are based on an extensive survey of Boston's poor and non-poor populations taken between November, 1988, and April, 1989.

Our specific interest was the working-age population of Boston. We focused on people who are 18 to 60 years old and their live-in relatives and children. Excluded are full-time college students, the homeless, and people living in institutions such as prisons or mental hospitals.

The geographic boundaries of the survey are the city limits of Boston. This area includes the downtown business district, and the neighborhoods: Allston, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, the Fenway, Franklin, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Kenmore Square, Mattapan, the North End, Roslindale, Roxbury, South Boston, the South End, and West Roxbury.

Contacts were made with 16,916 households by a combination of random-digit telephone dialing and door-to-door interviews. Each household was administered a brief screening interview. From this group, 1,065 households were identified as poor and 903 households as non-poor. People within these groups were then interviewed for 30 and 10 minutes respectively.

In this report, any member of a household whose income falls below 125 percent of the federal poverty line is classified as poor. This level reflects the high cost of living in Boston; it is also a standard used by many city and state agencies. Non-poor are those whose incomes exceed 125 percent of the federal poverty standard; admittedly, however, many of these have incomes well below middle or upper-class standards.

Thus, a single person in the poor sample has an income of less than \$7,500 a year; a two-person household, less than \$9,500; a three-person household, less than \$11,500; a four-person household, \$14,500; and a five-person household, \$17,500 a year.

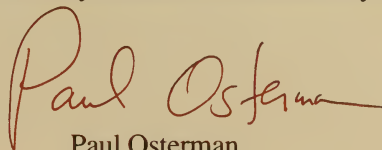
Occasionally, comparisons will be made between Boston and other U.S. central cities. In these cases, the data refer to populations which are comparable: both exclude college students, the homeless and institutionalized, and those from households where no one is 18 to 60 years old.

All charts refer to 1989 Boston data unless otherwise stated.

The first chapter of this report offers an overview of Boston. Subsequent chapters draw comparisons between the poor and non-poor along many indicators, including population distributions, demographic characteristics, household structure, employment patterns, work history, service provision, institutional connection, and school enrollment and perceptions of school quality.

This is the first in a series of reports. Subsequent publications will provide information on Boston's Asian populations, additional data about the Hispanic population, and various neighborhood profiles.

We extend our gratitude to the staff and the research team organized and deployed by the University of Massachusetts Center for Survey Research. Their tenacity and skill are well appreciated.



Paul Osterman
Chief Investigator



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Executive Summary

Who is poor in Boston in 1989? Some say that a rising tide of prosperity lifts all boats, but whose boats are those we see, broken on the shore?

If you read this survey from beginning to end, slowly wending your way through paragraphs dense with numbers and percentages, you will have the long answer.

The short answer is that Boston poverty has decreased since 1980; and that the substantial poverty which remains in 1989 is a phenomenon of women, single parents, families, minorities, and the disabled.

Further, by adding any of these factors together, poverty rates (percentage of a group that is poor) grow even higher. For instance, if you consider the group with the highest poverty rate in Boston — Hispanics — and the family structure with the highest poverty — single parents — you get a startling result: eight out of ten Hispanic single parents are poor. And nearly three-quarters of Hispanic children are growing up in poverty.

Of course, the main concern is not this group or that, useful or disturbing though such analysis may be, but that citizens of Boston are suffering in the midst of plenty.

Most of the information in this survey, except that specifically concerning all Boston residents, excludes college students, and those in households where no one is 18 to 60 years old. With these restrictions, the city's population in 1989 is about 387,700 people. Of this population, approximately 214,700 are white, 91,700 are black, 35,000 are Hispanic, and 46,300 belong to other groups.

Over the past decade, these proportions have changed significantly. Whites have dropped from 64 to 55 percent of the total population. Blacks declined slightly from 25 to 24 percent, and Hispanics increased from eight to ten percent.

In 1989, about 21,200 households, or a total of 71,500 individuals, fall below 125 percent of the federal poverty line, the standard used for this survey. That means that about one Bostonian in six is poor.

Of these 71,500 poor people, approximately 16,100 are white, 20,900 are black, 16,000 are Hispanic, and 18,500 are in other groups. Thus, in a city with a white majority, with blacks as the largest and Hispanics as the next largest minority group, a poor person is almost equally likely to be white, black, Hispanic, or "other." This is because the poverty rates of these groups vary considerably. For example, of the total white population, eight percent are poor. For blacks, the poverty rate is 23 percent, and the Hispanic rate is 46 percent.

Another disparity: a poor person in Boston is three times more likely to be female than male, a thought-provoking figure even in a city which has somewhat more women than men.

Even with the suffering borne by identifiable groups, there is good news as well. Able-bodied single people were a substantial percentage of the poor in 1980; by 1989, however, most have been lifted out of poverty by Boston's economic boom. This is particularly true of whites, a group which tends to be single. The much higher poverty rates for the small percentages of single blacks and Hispanics have been cut in half as well.

The success of singles has left families (two or more related people living together) to make up a greater percentage of the poor. Still, even this group has benefited in absolute terms. The small fraction of white families living in poverty in 1980 has been cut almost in half — as has the much more substantial fraction of black families living in poverty. Hispanics have the highest of the family rates, but even this poverty rate decreased a little.

Single parents as a whole became a larger percentage of the poor, because other groups have done so well. But, again, even single parents are less likely to be poor than they were at the beginning of the decade. In 1980, 61 percent of all single parents fell below 125 percent of the federal poverty line; in 1989, 41 percent do.

The chart below shows the change in poverty rates over time from 1980 to 1989 at 125 percent of the federal standard for different family structures and racial groups in Boston:

1980 Boston Poverty Rates

	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>% of White</i>	<i>% of Black</i>	<i>% of Hispanic</i>
Singles	23	19	32	38
Single Parents	61	56	60	74
Families	24	15	37	53

1989 Boston Poverty Rates

	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>% of White</i>	<i>% of Black</i>	<i>% of Hispanic</i>
Singles	6	3	9	23
Single Parents	41	26	35	79
Families	19	8	22	45
All Residents	17	8	23	46

Another disadvantaged group that shows up strongly in the poor sample are the permanently, totally disabled. There is a one in five chance that a poor man will have a permanent total disability, and a better than one in ten chance for a poor woman. Too, the poor are more often sick than the non-poor; in fact, they are over four times as likely to have health problems that affect their activities than those in the non-poor sample.

The poor indeed stand out compared to the city as a whole, where the average person is very likely to be single, professional, and well-educated.

The most striking findings of this survey concern the relationship of the poor to the job market. A number of common preconceived ideas about the poor appear to be false — at least in Boston, 1989.

Myth #1: Most of the poor are not working or do not want to work. In fact, almost half of all able-bodied poor respondents were indeed working at the time they were interviewed. An additional quarter worked some time in the previous two years. In all, about three-quarters of the poor are either currently working or have recently worked.

In addition to those who were working when they were interviewed, most poor respondents would either like to work or have some overwhelming problem that prevents them from working (poor health, or taking care of a child or sick relative, for instance). In all, 95 percent of the poor are currently working, would like to work, or have a good reason not to. Only a tiny fraction — five percent — cannot give a reason or just do not want to work.

Myth #2: The poor are always on welfare. In fact, a substantial percentage of the poor, over a third, have not been on welfare at all in the past five years. Under a third have been on it all of that time. The rest rely on welfare intermittently.

Many people who are on welfare work, too. Of those on welfare at the time of the interview, a fifth were working, two-thirds would like to, and a tenth had looked for work in the past four weeks.

Only a tiny percentage of the able-bodied have never worked; virtually all of these are women with children.

Myth #3: The non-poor have access to good jobs in the suburbs that the poor cannot reach. In fact, the poor and the non-poor commute outside the city in equal percentages. A third of each group works outside of Boston. Another third of each group lives in a Boston neighborhood and works in downtown Boston. The rest both live and work in a neighborhood or downtown.

Myth #4: The poor are very dependent on public institutions and community organizations. In fact, many poor respondents experience a lack of connection with organizations designed to help them. In general, they seem to have little awareness of such institutions. When asked if they were familiar with any community organizations, three-quarters of all poor respondents say no.

Other insights in the job market: while a substantial percentage of the poor are working part-time, most are poor because they are making extremely low hourly wages. The poor also tend to be clustered in certain low-paying fields: hotels, personal services, entertainment, cleaning service, and retail trade. And those classified as poor in the survey express less need for day care than the non-poor. However, they are more likely than the non-poor to have quit their jobs to take care of a child.

Although much of the information in this report is discouraging, it should be stated again that a message of this survey is that a rising economic tide does lift most boats — but not quite all. The exceptions are those swamped by a cargo of obstacles — sickness, a sick relative, a small child, poor mastery of English. Such problems make it difficult to take full advantage of any kind of opportunity. A booming economy cannot do it alone.

It can, however, make the problem smaller. Poverty in Boston requires concern and action, but the problem is less daunting than in most other cities — or than it was here ten years ago.

That much the tide has done for us.

CHAPTER ONE

An Overview of Boston



An Overview of Boston

Chapter One looks at the adult citizens of Boston in terms of population, household structure, employment patterns, occupations, and other general information.

Subsequent chapters separate the population into poor and non-poor, and discuss the survey results in more detail.

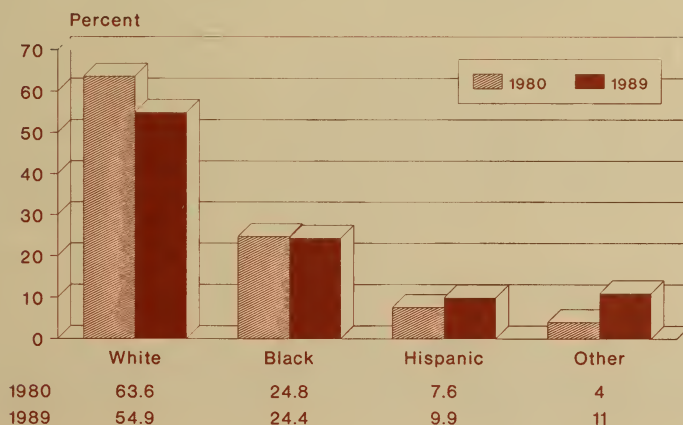
Every city is composed of young and old, rich and poor, college professor, high school dropout, white, black, Hispanic — but the proportions are distinctive and change over time.

The average Bostonian in 1989 is less likely to be white, and more likely to be affluent than ten years ago. He is also, on average, single, under 40, working outside the home, well-educated, well-paid, and a professional. He is also more likely to be a she; Boston has a higher percentage of women than men (56 to 45 percent.)

In 1980, for the standard population of our survey, which excludes the elderly and college students, about 64 percent of all Bostonians were white, about 25 percent were black, about eight percent were Hispanic, and all other groups added up to an additional four percent. (Many of those in the “other” category are Asian; this population will be discussed in detail in a subsequent report.)

Today, for the same population, about 55 percent of all Bostonians are white, about 24 percent are black, and about ten percent are Hispanic; “other” is now 11 percent.

Population Distribution 1980 & 1989



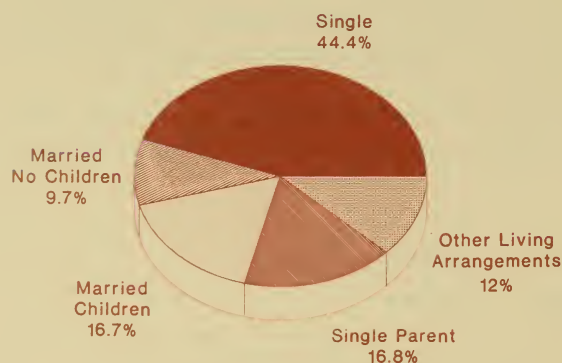
That means that whites have dropped as a percentage of the population, retaining a slight majority at a little over half, blacks have stayed the same, at about a quarter, Hispanics have increased a little, while “other” has almost tripled. Looking at Boston families (two or more related people living together): in 1980, about 63 percent of all families were white, about 26 percent were black, and about eight percent were Hispanic — pretty close to their percentages of the population. Today, 55 percent are white, 28 percent are black, and 11 percent are Hispanic.¹

Thus, in 1989, out of ten Boston families, roughly five would be white, almost three would be black, and one would be Hispanic, with one “other” family.

THE STRUCTURE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Boston tends to be a town of single people. Forty-four percent of all Bostonians, both poor and non-poor, are neither married nor have children. This is particularly true of whites — 55 percent are single — and less true of blacks, at 20 percent, and Hispanics, at 28 percent.

Household Structure



Slightly more than a quarter of all Boston households are made up of married people. (A household can be a single person, a married couple, a parent and child, etc.) About ten percent of all households are married people with no children; 17 percent are married with children. Hispanic households are more likely to consist of a married couple with children; 26 percent conform to this traditional family model.

A smaller but still substantial 17 percent of all Boston households consist of single-parent families. This is relatively rare for whites — eight percent fall

in this category, compared to 40 percent of blacks and 32 percent of Hispanics.

Blacks are more likely than whites or Hispanics to be single but living with another related adult — perhaps a sibling or parent. Sixteen percent of all blacks are single people living with relatives, compared to 11 percent of whites and seven percent of Hispanics.

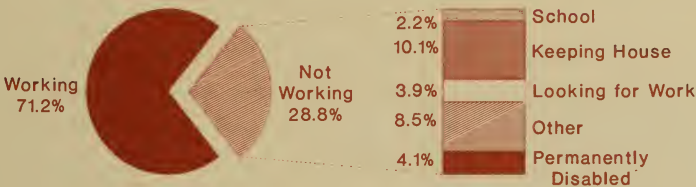
¹When college students and the elderly are included, the racial distribution of Boston changes. For this group, the total population is 58 percent white, 22 percent black, and nine percent Hispanic. Family proportions are: 59 percent white, 25 percent black, and ten percent Hispanic.

GENERAL EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

As of this writing, Boston is about as close to full employment as a city can get. The vast majority of adult Bostonians — 71 percent — are paid employees.

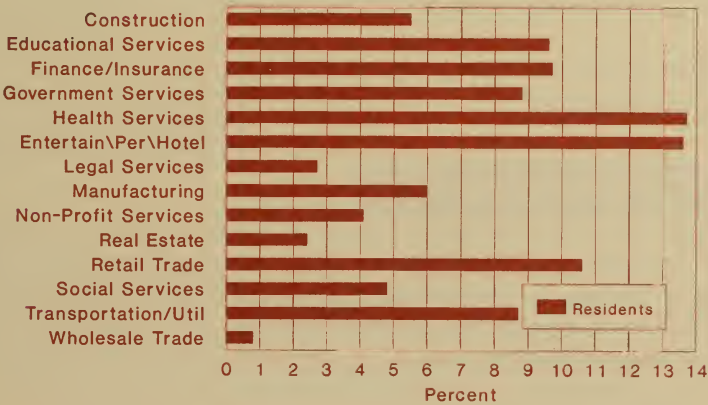
In addition, about four percent of all Boston residents are looking for work outside the home, and four percent are permanently, totally disabled. About ten percent are keeping house, and about two percent are in school (remember that full-time college students are excluded from this survey).

Employment Status Adult Residents



Different demographic groups have different work patterns. For instance, 79 percent of singles are working, compared to 66 percent of adults in families. Not surprisingly, adults in families are more likely to be keeping house as their major activity — 16 percent — as opposed to less than two percent of singles.

Industry of Employment Adult Residents Living and Working in Boston



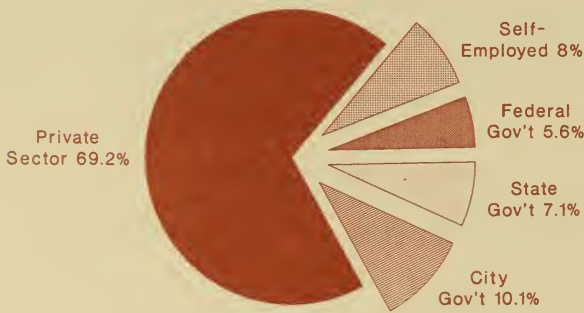
OCCUPATIONS

Boston is a white-collar city, with little work in the blue-collar fields of manufacturing or heavy industry. Only six percent of all Bostonians who work in the city do this type of work. Another six percent work in the construction industry, while nine percent work in transportation and utilities.

Health services are an important part of the Boston economy, providing jobs for 14 percent of those who live and work in the city. Another 14 percent are employed in hotels, entertainment, and personal services (hairdressers and maids are examples of this last category). Ten percent work in finance, ten percent in education, and nine percent work for the government, either city, state, or federal.

Within these fields, Bostonians work in a variety of occupations. Twenty-one percent of all Boston residents work as office support staff or clerical help. Seven percent work in food service. Four percent have retail sales positions. Two percent work in some form of cleaning service.

Employment by Sector Boston Residents Working in the City



Many Bostonians have middle-class jobs. Thirty-three percent are managers, scientists, engineers, health professionals, teachers, or other professionals.

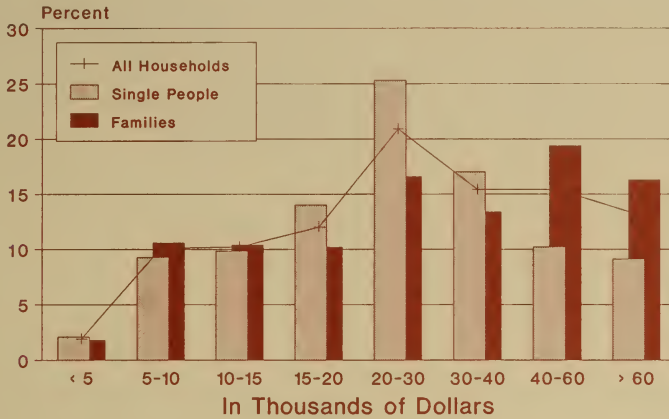
Of those who live and work in the city, 70 percent work for the private sector. That figure is slightly lower for blacks, who more often work in the public sector — particularly for the state government, which accounts for 16 percent of all black employment, compared to three percent for whites, and eight percent for Hispanics.

More whites are self-employed than members of other groups. A tenth of whites are self-employed, twice the rate of blacks or Hispanics.

DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

Only a small percentage of Boston households — about two percent — make less than \$5,000 a year. Roughly ten percent of all Boston households earn between: \$5,000 to \$10,000, \$10,000 to \$15,000, or \$15,000 to \$20,000. More generally, about 34 percent of all Boston households earn less than \$20,000 a year.

Income Distribution By Household Type



About 21 percent make between \$20,000 and \$30,000, with an additional 15 percent receiving \$30,000 to \$40,000. Fifteen percent make between \$40,000 and \$60,000, and 13 percent make over \$60,000.

Thus, 44 percent of all Boston households make over \$30,000 a year. Singles are more likely to have an income between \$15,000 and \$40,000. Families — with, naturally, at least the possibility of two incomes — are more likely to make \$40,000 or more.

A household is considered poor in this report if it consists of: a single person earning less than \$7,500 a year; two people earning less than \$9,500; three people earning less than \$11,500; four earning less than \$14,500; or five people earning less than \$17,500 per year. These figures represent 125 percent of the federal poverty line.

"I work in the mailroom for a large company. I usually do the unknowns. I train people. I deliver, I sort mail, I do the meters, I send it out. I do salesman's work, part-time reception. That sums it up. I do 'most anything."

White woman, 27, single.

AGE AND EDUCATION

In many ways, this is a very young city. Seventy-nine percent of all adults, and 87 percent of all singles, are under the age of 40. Adults in families tend to be a bit older; about 73 percent of them are 40 or under.

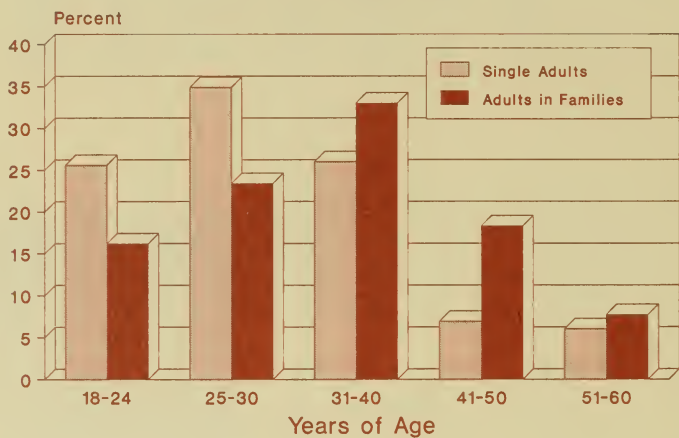
As might be expected of the residents of a city famous for its colleges and universities, Bostonians tend to be well-educated. Only 16 percent of all Boston residents are high school dropouts. Twenty-seven percent have graduated from a four-year college; and an additional 12 percent have a graduate degree as well. That means that about 38

percent of all Bostonians in the sample (between 18 and 60, excluding full-time college students) have a college degree or better.

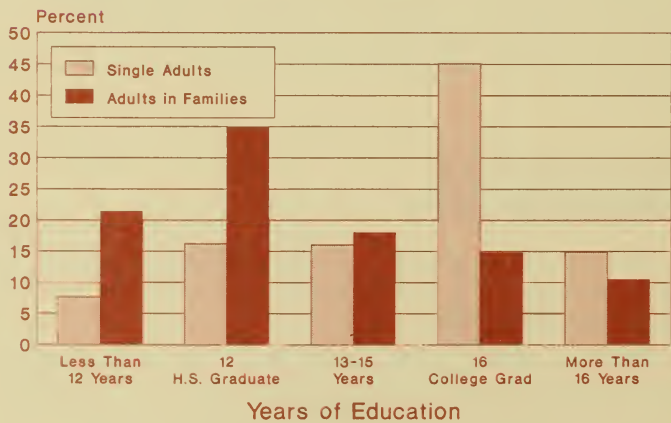
Single people in particular are well-educated: almost half — 45 percent — have a four-year college degree. In addition, 15 percent have done graduate work, meaning that 60 percent of all single Bostonians between 18 and 60 are college graduates.

Adults who live in families have much less education. Fifteen percent have college degrees, and an additional 11 percent have done graduate work, meaning that only 26 percent of all adults who are in families are college graduates.

Age Distribution Adult Population



Educational Distribution Adult Population



Singles who are high school dropouts are a particularly rare species: about eight percent, as compared to 21 percent of adults in families, do not have a high school diploma.

TOTAL POPULATION

The Boston population is about 459,500 (excluding those who cannot speak English or Spanish, those who live in institutions, and the homeless.) Of that population, about 266,600, or 58 percent, are white; about 101,100, or 22 percent, are black; and about 41,400, or nine percent, are Hispanic; the rest belong to other groups.

In addition to those not included within the 459,500 figure, this survey does not include households where no one is 18 to 60 years old, nor does it include full-time college students. By this standard, there are about 387,700 people in Boston.

Of that number, about 214,700, or 55 percent, are white; 91,700, or 24 percent, are black; 35,000, or almost ten percent, are Hispanic; the rest belong to other groups. This is the basic population referred to in this survey, unless otherwise stated.

Summary: Chapter One

- Excluding the homeless, people living in institutions such as jails and prisons, and those who speak neither English nor Spanish, Boston has a population of 459,500 people. Most of the information in this survey, except that specifically concerning all Boston residents, excludes college students, and those in households where no one is 18 to 60 years old. With these restrictions, the city's population is 387,700.
- Nearly half of Bostonians are single — 44 percent of all Boston households consist of single people. Married, childless people make up ten percent; people who are married with children, 17 percent; and single parents, another 17 percent.
- Boston has a well-educated population; 38 percent of all residents 18 to 60 years old have at minimum a degree from a four-year college. Singles are particularly well-educated; they are more than twice as likely to be college graduates as adults in families.
- Boston has a large white population with a growing proportion of minorities. In 1980, whites made up about 64 percent of the population, blacks were almost 25 percent, and Hispanics were a little under eight percent. In 1989, whites have dropped to 55 percent, blacks have remained fairly constant at 24 percent, and Hispanics have increased to ten percent.
- Seventy-one percent of all adult Bostonians are employed outside the home.
- Boston is a city with little manufacturing, and 33 percent of all residents are professionals.
- Thirty-four percent of all Boston households earn less than \$20,000 a year. Thirty-six percent make between \$20,000 and \$40,000, and 29 percent make \$40,000 or more.

CHAPTER TWO

Contrasts Between the Poor & Non-Poor



Contrasts Between the Poor & Non-Poor

Chapter Two contrasts Boston's poor and non-poor population, and draws comparisons between Boston and other U.S. central cities.²

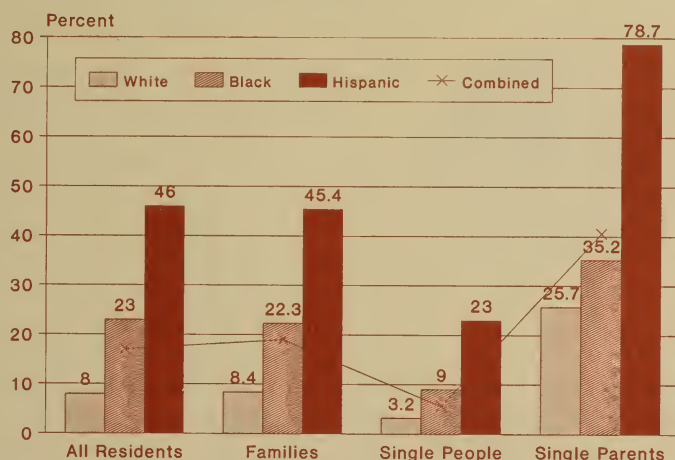
During this past decade, a period of prosperity and growth, many residents of Boston escaped from poverty.

This is particularly remarkable since, at the beginning of the decade, Boston poverty was slightly worse than that of other U.S. cities. (In 1980, Boston's black poverty rate was almost exactly the national average for central cities, but whites and Hispanics were less well off.) Boston's improvement is even more noteworthy considering that, during the decade, poverty rates in most other major cities have actually worsened.

Unfortunately, this survey confirms that even the best economy does not eliminate poverty. The poor who were able to benefit most from the growing Boston economy were usually those with the fewest barriers to traditional employment — in other words, the healthy and childless.

Those least likely to benefit were those with obstacles to employment: the sick and

Boston Poverty Rates



²All national comparisons refer to other major U.S. cities. As with Boston data, the homeless, the elderly, those in institutions such as jails and mental hospitals, and full-time college students are not included.

disabled, those with small children, and those with minimal education or English language skills.

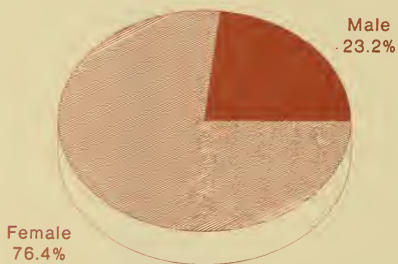
Today's average Bostonian is white, well-educated, and professional. But focus on the poor, and one sees a different city. The poor Bostonian is almost equally likely to be white, black, or Hispanic. His chances of being a high school dropout or a high school graduate are about 50-50. And he is almost certain to be a she — three-quarters of the poor are women.

This is most striking in the case of blacks and whites, where the ratio is about four women to every man; it is somewhat less so in the case of Hispanics, where it is closer to two to one. (Even among the non-poor, there are more women than men in Boston — 56 percent of Boston adults are women, 45 percent are men.)

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about the problem of poverty in Boston is that, while certain populations are suffering considerably, the problem here is smaller than that of many cities, such as New York, Detroit, or Washington.

There are some 17,000 poor families in Boston — or about 71,500 poor people. Of this group, 16,100 are white, 20,900 are black, 16,000 are Hispanic, and 18,500 are in other groups. In other words, eight percent of whites, 23 percent of blacks, and 46 percent of Hispanics are living in poverty. About 14,500 poor children under the age of six, and about 20,900 children ages 6 to 17, have parents whose incomes fall below 125 percent of the federal poverty line. Among poor adults, 4,200 live alone and 31,900 live in families.

Male & Female Distribution Adults In Poor Families

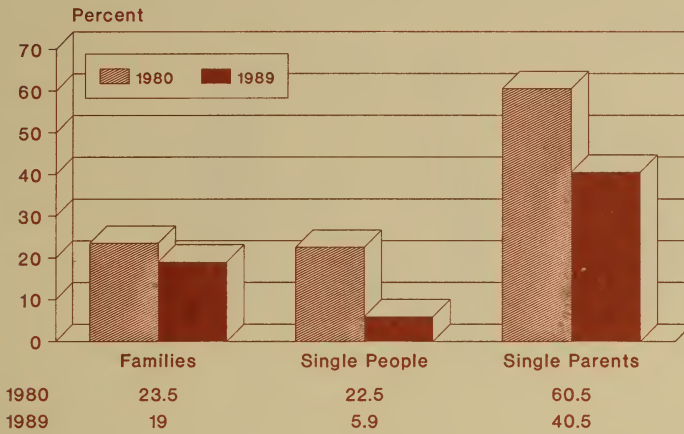


The poverty rate for all individuals in Boston, at 125 percent of the federal poverty line, is 17 percent, or about one person in six. At the federal rate, the individual poverty rate is 11 percent, or about one person in ten. The poor tend to live in families, and their families tend to be larger, an average of 3.98 people (compared to an average of 3.29 for non-poor families.)

The proportion of families of different races who are poor has shifted in the last decade. In 1980, 39 percent of poor families were white, 40 percent were black, and 17 percent were His-

panic. Now 29 percent of poor families are white, 35 percent are black, and 28 percent are Hispanic. Thus, whites have dropped as a percentage of the total population, but they have decreased dramatically as a percentage of the poor. Blacks have stayed the same as a percentage of the population, but they have also dropped as a percentage of the poor, though much more modestly. Hispanics have gone up as a percentage of all residents, but have increased even more as a percentage of the poverty population.

Change in Poverty Rates 1980 & 1989



The Hispanic population has been significantly left out of this decade's prosperity. The black poverty rate is still unacceptably high — three times that of whites — but the rate for Hispanics is even greater: six times that of whites. The rising tide that is supposed to lift all boats has left this part of the community stranded on the shores of poverty. In short, whites are doing well in Boston, blacks are doing well compared to the U.S. as a whole, and Hispanics are doing worse than Hispanics in other cities.

Of course, while it is enlightening to study different populations, the very real finding of this study is that too many of Boston's citizens are living in poverty; too many have not prospered along with the rest of Boston.

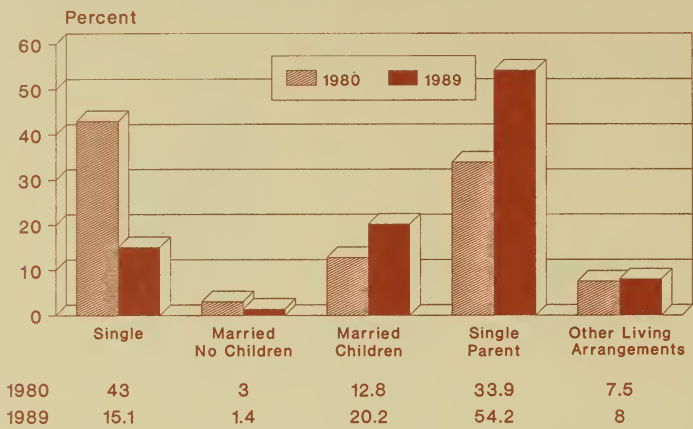
THE SINGLE POPULATION

Singles have benefited more than any other group from Boston's booming economy. In 1980, 43 percent of Boston households which fell below 125 percent of the federal poverty line consisted of a single person. Today, only 15 percent of poor households are made up of single persons (making less than \$7,500 a year.) Of those poor singles, about 40 percent are permanently, totally disabled. Thus, those who are poor, single, and able to work, make up a very small group. On the other hand, 48 percent of Boston's non-poor households are made up of a single person.

Boston's bonanza for single people has been distributed across racial lines. In 1980, 19 percent of single whites were poor. In 1989, only three percent are poor. Particularly since we've seen that whites, a large percentage of the population, also tend to be single (55 percent of all whites, poor and non-poor, are unmarried and childless) this adds up to a substantial improvement.

Thirty-two percent of all black singles were poor in 1980; nine percent are in 1989. Only 20 percent of blacks are single, however.

Structure of Poor Households 1980 & 1989



The 28 percent of all Hispanics who are single also showed improvement. Thirty-eight percent of Hispanic singles were poor in 1980, and 23 percent are now.

Even with these improvements, there remain very poor single-person households. In particular, whites who are poor have a special profile; they are disproportionately permanently and totally disabled, and single, and fewer are in the labor force.

FAMILIES

In the U.S. as a whole, both at the beginning and the end of the decade, somewhat fewer than a fifth of all families (two or more related people) fell below 125 percent of the federal poverty line.

More specifically, the number of families earning less than 125 percent of the poverty line in major U.S. cities has risen from 20 percent at the beginning of the decade, to 22 percent. Thus, among major U.S. cities, family poverty has become more prevalent.

The Boston experience, however, is nearly the opposite. Families in Boston were a little worse off than the national average in 1980, with about 24 percent falling below 125 percent of the poverty line, but now, at 19 percent, they're doing a point or two better.

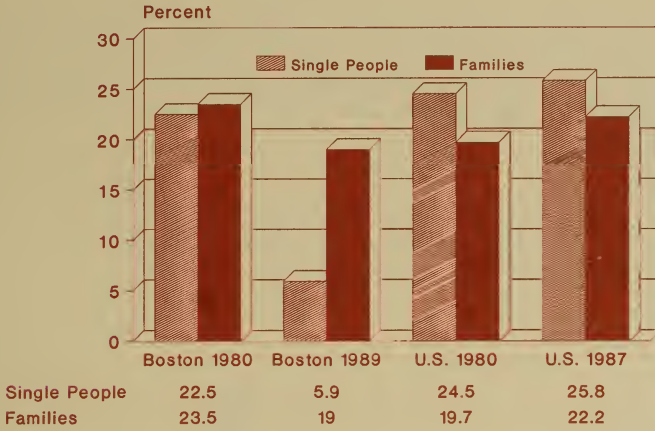
Again, analysis by race shows that the beneficial effect of a booming economy extends to almost every group. In 1980, about 15 percent of all white families were poor; in 1989, only eight percent are poor.

The figures for black families are, if anything, more dramatic — mostly because black families in the U.S. are doing so much worse, making Boston's improvement

"We poor people, we stick together, help each other out. That's how we get by."

White woman, 59, widowed.

Poverty Rates: Boston & Central Cities 1980 & 1989



look even better. Black families fared worse than the national average in 1980, with 37 percent living in poverty, as opposed to what was then the national average of 33 percent. But this group did far better in Boston in 1989; 22 percent are living in poverty, compared to the national average of 38 percent. This still means, however, that more than one out of five black families in Boston is living in poverty.

The situation for Hispanic families (other than single parents), has improved a bit, from an extremely low base. In the beginning of the decade, 53 percent of all Boston Hispanic families were poor (as opposed to 38 percent nationwide.) Today 45 percent of all Hispanic families are poor — still worse than the national figure of 39 percent.

Today, somewhat less than half of all Hispanic families, between a fifth and a quarter of black families, and under a tenth of white families, are below the poverty line. Clustered together as poor families, 29 percent are white, 35 percent are black, and 27 percent are Hispanic.

SINGLE PARENTS

Single parents are the most disadvantaged group. Over the last decade, the percent of single parents who are poor has decreased, but their proportion of the total poor population has increased substantially.

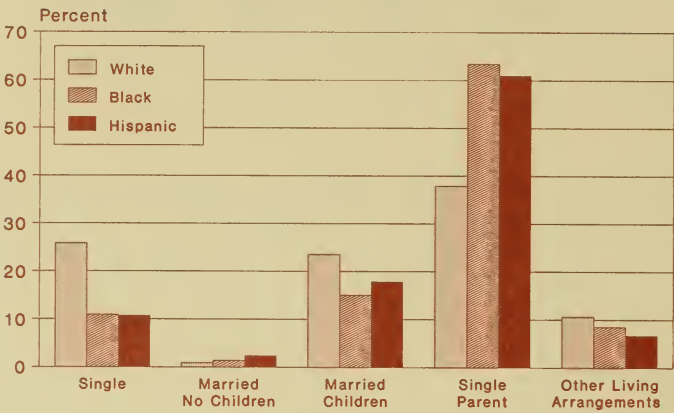
In 1980, 61 percent of all single parents in Boston fell below the poverty line, while in 1989, about 41 percent live in poverty. This compares well with the national picture, which used to be better than Boston for single parents (52 percent poverty rate) and now, at 56 percent, is considerably worse than Boston. However, because other groups of poor people in Boston reduced their numbers even more, the number of poor single parents went from a third of the poverty population to over half.

Looked at another way, 12 percent of the non-poor are single parents, compared to 54

percent of the poor. While the Boston boom lifted a lot of single parents out of poverty, it did even better for single non-parents, leaving single parents to make up a larger percentage of the poor.

Breaking down some of these figures by race: in 1980, 56 percent of all white single-parent households were poor; in 1989, 26 percent are. (Thirty-eight percent of poor whites are single parents.) In 1980, 60 percent of black single-parent households were poor; while 35 percent are in 1989. (Sixty-three percent of poor black households are made up of single parents.)

Household Structure Of Poor Households By Race



To a large degree, the difficulties of the Hispanic population can be traced to the problems of Hispanic single parents. This group is the only one whose poverty rate (again, the percentage of the group which is poor) increased in the 1980s, from 74 to 79 percent. In addition, more Hispanics are single parents. Forty-seven percent of poor Hispanic households fell into this category in 1980; 61 percent, in 1989. These two increases offset the small gains made by Hispanic singles and families. Thus, the plight of this part of Boston's population stands in harsh contrast to every other group.

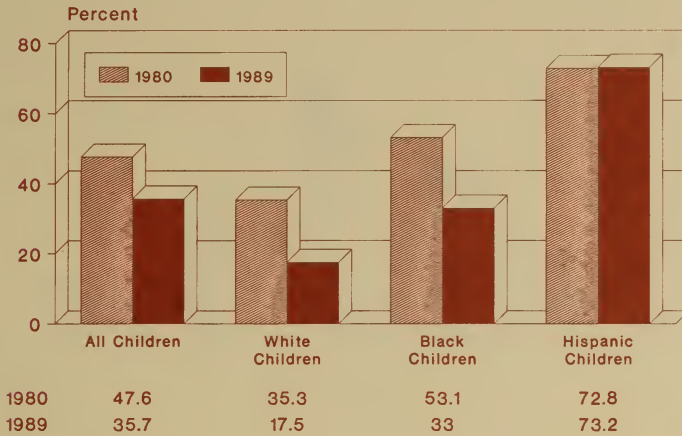
THE CHILDREN OF BOSTON

Children are directly affected by the difficulties of families. In 1980, almost half of all Boston children under the age of six grew up in poverty. By 1989, the situation had improved somewhat; today, one child out of every three in Boston is poor.

Poverty rates for white and black children have dropped substantially. In 1980, 35 percent of all white children under six were poor; in 1989, only about 18 percent are. In 1980, 53 percent of all black children fell below the line; by the end of the decade, 33 percent do. Of course, these figures remain unacceptably high.

Once again, the bad news is that the extremely difficult situation of Hispanic children

Poverty Rates of Children Under 6 1980 & 1989



showed no improvement; 73 percent, or about three-quarters, of all Hispanic children under the age of 6 grow up in poverty.

This is one case where use of the federal poverty line reveals a slight improvement. Sixty-two percent of all Hispanic children under six fell below this standard in 1980, while only 42 percent do in 1989. Thus, many Hispanic children live in families whose incomes fall between 100 and 125 percent of the federal poverty line.

AGE, HEALTH, LANGUAGE SKILLS, EDUCATION, AND RESIDENCE

Long-term residence in the city does not seem to affect poverty rates much. Seventy-eight percent of the poor have lived in Boston more than five years. The Hispanic population is only slightly more recent; 75 percent have lived in Boston five years or more.

In general, Boston's poor are younger than the city's non-poor. Thirteen percent of the non-poor and 25 percent of the poor are between 18 and 24 years old. (Remember, college students are not included in this report.) And while 51 percent of the poor are between 25 and 40, almost 59 percent of the non-poor are in this age group.

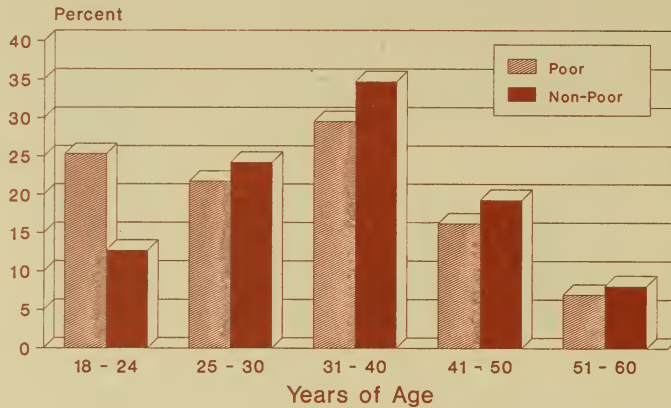
The poor are more likely to get sick, and the sick are very likely to be poor. About 30 percent of the poor say they have health problems that limit the kind of work they can do, while only seven percent of the non-poor sample say this.

Many of the poor have permanent, total disabilities that prevent them from working at all. About 19 percent of the men and 12 percent of the women in the poor sample fall into this category. A higher

"My health. Can you give me my health?"

White woman, 58, cancer patient; asked what would make her life better.

Age Distribution Poor & Non-Poor Adults



percentage of poor whites — a quarter of the men and 15 percent of the women — are disabled.

Another barrier is the inability to speak English fluently. As will be noted in Chapter Three, a third of all Hispanics who are not interested in applying for a downtown office job give language problems as a reason.

As might be expected, considering the difficulty of mastering a new language, more recent Spanish-speaking arrivals tend to speak English less well. Only 12 percent of all poor Hispanic respondents who have lived here less than two years speak “very good” English, while two-thirds speak “poor” English, as evaluated by the interviewers. Those who have lived here for three to five years do little better. But those who have lived here more than five years show dramatic improvement: 30 percent speak “very good” English, and 20 percent speak “good” English.

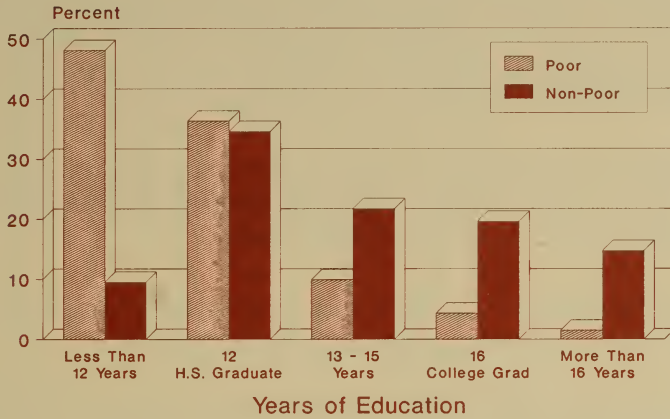
Thus, half of those respondents who have lived here more than five years speak at least fairly good English. Of course, this also means that half of all Spanish-speaking residents who have lived here for five years or more speak English poorly or not at all.

Years ago, it was not considered necessary to have a college education to do most jobs. Today that is no longer the case. Unfortunately, 48 percent of the poor have less than a high school diploma, and only six percent of the poor possess a college or graduate degree. In contrast, the non-poor tend to be well-educated. Fifty-eight percent have some college education, with 49 percent having at least a four-year college degree.

It might seem logical that poor single parents would be the worst educated, since often young women drop out of school to have a baby. However, this turns out not to be the case: about half of all poor single parents are high school dropouts, which is about the norm for the poor.

There are, however, educational differences between family types among the non-poor. For example, non-poor people without children seem to have more education than non-poor people with children. Of the childless group — whether married or single — 60 percent have at least a four-year college education.

Educational Distribution Poor & Non-Poor Adults



Of non-poor people with children, thirty-five percent of married people have graduated from a four-year college; only 20 percent of non-poor single parents have this much education.

Poor Hispanics are the least well-educated group. While 31 percent of all poor whites and about 42 percent of poor blacks are high school dropouts, about 65 percent of poor Hispanics are in this category. Much of this difference is caused by lower educational levels of non-mainland-born Hispanics. While over half of all mainland-born Hispanics did not finish high school — again, about average for the poor — the figure for Puerto Rican and Central American-born Hispanics is about 70 percent. Or, looking at ninth grade completion rates, only about ten percent of all mainland-born Hispanics dropped out of school before the end of ninth grade, but almost half of all Puerto Rican and Central American-born Hispanics did.

Determining whether the high percentage of school dropouts is due to language difficulties or other factors is beyond the scope of this survey. But there is a definite correlation between inadequate English language skills and limited education.

Of those Hispanics who have less than a high school education (65 percent), about a quarter speak “good” or “very good” English; over half speak “poor” English as evaluated by the interviewers. Of high school graduates, almost 70 percent speak “good” or “very good” English. Only 12 percent of high school graduates speak “poor” English. The relationship is complicated by the association between place of birth (mainland U.S. or not) and fluency of English. These patterns will be explored further in the report on Hispanics to be issued early next year.

“I have a problem with reading and writing. I have a diploma but they graduated me too fast. I only read [to my child] once in a blue moon — in a blue moon, for 15 minutes.”

Black woman, 22, one child, aged 3.

Summary: Chapter Two

- Boston's poor population totals 71,500 people living in 21,200 poor households. Of this number, 4,200 are single adults, 31,900 are adults in families (there are 17,000 poor families), 14,500 are children younger than six, and 20,900 are children six to 17.
- Poverty rates have been substantially reduced since 1980, but they remain quite high: 19 percent for all families other than single parents, about six percent for single people, and 41 percent for single parents.
- Poverty has been almost eliminated among able-bodied single people. Families now make up a greater percentage of the poor population.
- Single parents have the highest poverty rates, although — for blacks and whites at least — even this group has benefited in absolute terms.
- Poor households average 3.98 people; the average for non-poor households is 3.29 people.
- The poverty rate for whites is eight percent (16,100 people): three percent for singles, eight percent for families, and 26 percent for single parents. Because whites are a majority of the population, they account for 29 percent of all poor families. Poor whites are more often permanently, totally disabled than members of other poor groups.
- The poverty rate for Hispanics is 46 percent (16,000 people): 45 percent for families, 23 percent for singles, and 79 percent for single parents. Hispanics are only 10 percent of the total population but account for 27 percent of poor families.
- The black poverty rate, 23 percent (20,900 people), is still very high, but in between those of whites and Hispanics: 22 percent for black families, nine percent for singles, 35 percent for single parents. Blacks are 25 percent of the population, but 35 percent of poor families.
- Compared to other U.S. cities, Boston does better for whites and blacks, and worse for Hispanics.
- About half of the poor are high school dropouts.

- The poor are more often sick than the non-poor. Thirty percent have health problems that affect their activities, compared to seven percent of non-poor respondents. Nineteen percent of the men and 12 percent of the women in the poor sample have permanent, total disabilities.
- A fifth of all white children, one-third of all black children, and three-quarters of all Hispanic children are growing up in poverty.
- Fifty percent of poor Hispanics speak little or no English.

CHAPTER THREE

Dedication to the Labor Market



Dedication to the Labor Market

Chapter Three explores the relationship between the poor and the labor market: the extent to which the poor are working or looking for work, why some are not working, and their attitudes toward employment. Other topics include commuting patterns, job location, and wages and hours.

Among the many misconceptions that haunt the poor, two are particularly deep-rooted. One is that poor people are not looking for work; another, that poor people are permanently on welfare. Neither idea is supported by this survey.

In fact, one of the most striking findings is the dedication of the poor to the job market. Of all able-bodied poor respondents, 44 percent were working at the time they were interviewed, 38 percent say that they would like to be working, 13 percent have a problem that prevents them from working (health problem, child care, other) and about five percent cannot give a reason or just do not want to work. (Of all poor respondents, 19 percent of men, and 12 percent of women, are permanently, totally disabled.)

This means that 95 percent of able-bodied poor respondents are working, would like to work, or have some major personal problem that prevents them from working.

Again, of the able-bodied, 44 percent were working at the time of the interview. An additional 20 percent had worked the previous year, and an additional six percent had worked the year before. Thus, 70 percent of the poor had worked fairly recently. The figures are slightly higher for poor black respondents: over 78 percent, as opposed to under 70 percent of whites and Hispanics, had worked in the past two years at the time of the interview.

The percentage of the able-bodied who have never worked is small: eight percent of whites, four percent of blacks, and 15 percent of Hispanics. Of this group, 90 percent are women with children (30 percent are married, 60 percent are single parents.)

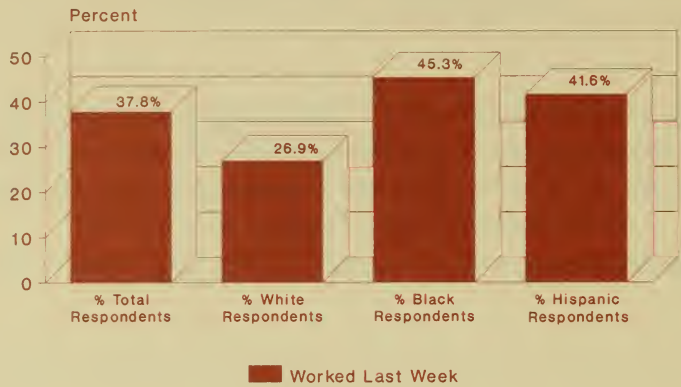
Of the able-bodied people who are not working, 69 percent would like to be working now. As one Hispanic father of three said, when asked what kind of job he would like: "Whatever I can find, I'm not choosy." A third of those who would like to be working were actively looking during the month prior to the survey.

Of the 32 percent of non-disabled poor respondents who say they do not want to be working now, 47 percent give child care for a reason. Fourteen percent say they are in

"I want to work with my hands. A job! I really want to work. I can't stand not working."

Black man, 42, second grade education, described as "very intelligent" by interviewer; he had been asked what would make his life better.

Poor Respondents Working
During The Week Before Interview
Includes Permanently, Totally Disabled



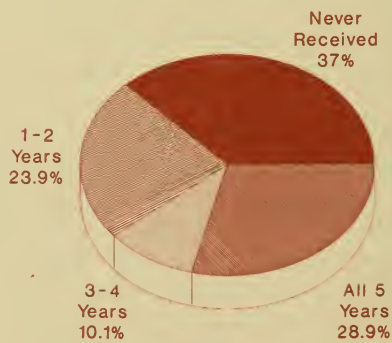
school, and five percent are taking care of a relative. Seventeen percent report poor health, four percent think there are no jobs out there, and seven percent are unable to give a reason why they do not want to work. Thus, only seven percent of those who are not working (or five percent of all the able-bodied poor) do not want to work — a very small number.

WORKING AND WELFARE

As for the common idea that most poor people are on welfare, 37 percent of the poor respondents had not used welfare at all in the past five years. Only 29 percent of the poor had been on welfare all of that time. The rest have been on and off of welfare; 24 percent received assistance some of the time (one or two years out of the past five), and ten percent more often (three to four years out of the past five).

Many of those on welfare are working. Of those who were on welfare at the time of the interview, 22 percent were working, 64 percent would like to work, and nine percent looked for work in the past four weeks.

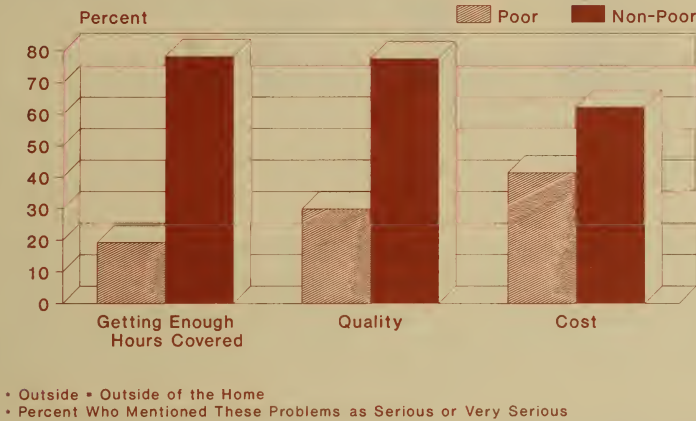
Welfare History
Assistance During Past 5 Years
Poor Respondents



THE DAY CARE PARADOX

The non-poor population seems to have a stronger response to the subject of day care than the poor. Seventy-eight percent of non-poor respondents indicate serious problems with getting enough hours covered and with the quality of care. And 62 percent report a problem with cost.

Difficulties With Outside Daycare Poor & Non-Poor



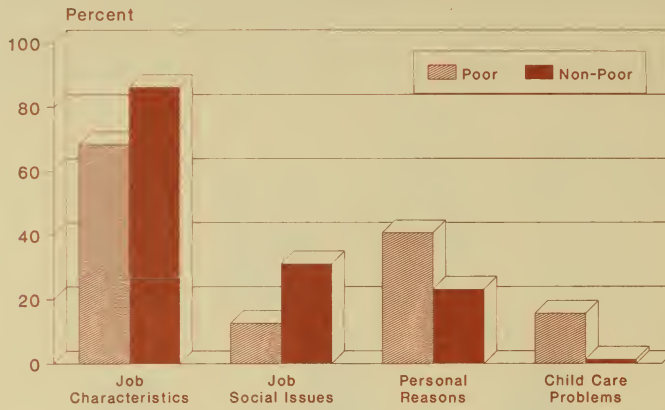
On the other hand, only 19 percent of the poor have a problem with the number of covered hours, 30 percent with quality, and 41 percent with cost. One reason the poor are less apt to express dissatisfaction with day care accessibility is that they are more likely to quit their jobs to take care of a child. The non-poor complain about the lack of day care, but seldom quit their jobs to take care of a child. Only one percent of non-poor respondents quit a job for this reason, compared to 16 percent of all poor respondents.

About 38 percent of poor respondents have someone other than themselves or their spouses helping to take care of their young children (under six), while 47 percent of the non-poor have such help. Of the 38 percent of the poor who are getting help, about 70 percent use relatives, while only 18 percent use outside day care. As one black grandmother said, “I baby-sit for my daughter. If I don’t, who will?” Lack of child care is not, however, the most common reason for the poor to leave their jobs. More significant are health and family problems.

LEAVING A JOB

Frequently the poor quit a job because of a crisis in their lives. Actually, the poor are somewhat more likely to have quit their most recent job than the non-poor — 64 percent, as opposed to 56 percent.

Reasons for Leaving A Job Adult Heads of Family



Categories Listed are the 1st & 2nd Significant Reasons Mentioned

More significantly, they tend to quit for different reasons. The poor cite “personal reasons other than child care,” almost twice as often as the non-poor. Examples of this type of reason are: illness, illness of a family member, returning to school, needing a break, or having a spouse move to get a job. Forty-one percent of the poor cite this sort of reason, compared to 23 percent of the non-poor.

“I have to be here for my kids, otherwise I know they will get into trouble.”

Hispanic woman, 33, divorced, five teenagers, asked why she didn't want to work.

The most typical reason to quit a job, among the poor and non-poor alike, relates to a problem with the job itself. Examples of this type of problem include: low wages, dislike of the work, taking another job, or wanting to look for another job, unacceptable hours, dangerous working conditions, difficulty traveling to work, and lack of a future. Sixty-eight percent of the poor give one of these as a reason for quitting; 86 percent of the non-poor who quit their jobs give one of these reasons.

Thirty-one percent of the non-poor quit because of “social issues on the job,” as opposed to 13 percent of poor respondents. Poor whites gave this sort of reason more often than poor blacks or poor Hispanics. Examples of such social issues are: did not like the people, felt uncomfortable there, friends did not respect you for working there, and the work was beneath the position you deserved.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

It is often thought that the poor have difficulty finding work because the good jobs have moved to the suburbs, where the poor cannot go. However, this theory does not seem to hold for Boston.

The poor and non-poor seem to have similar commuting patterns. Even poor single mothers, with all their family responsibilities, have about the same commuting profile as other poor. That is, about a third of the poor and non-poor work outside of Boston. Another third live in a Boston neighborhood and work downtown. The rest either live and work downtown, or live in one neighborhood and work in another.

The poor are slightly more likely to live and work in the same neighborhood — 17 percent, as opposed to 11 percent of the non-poor. Non-poor families are somewhat more likely to live in one neighborhood and work in another, while the non-poor as a group are more likely to live and work downtown — 14 percent.

INDUSTRIES & OCCUPATIONS

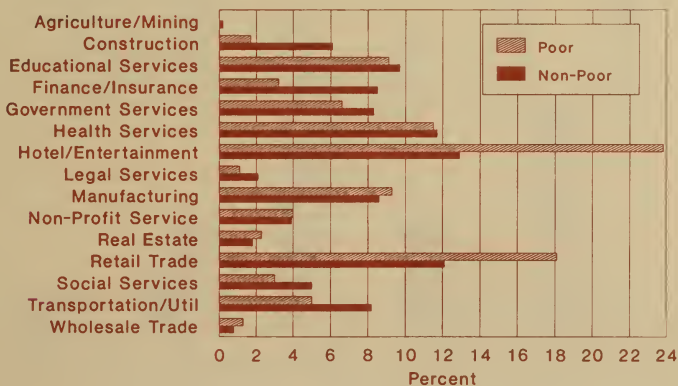
Of Boston's population that lives and works within the city limits, three-quarters (76 percent) of poor respondents, and almost as many of the non-poor (68 percent), work for the private sector. The non-poor are more likely to be self-employed, though this is a small group for both (nine percent of the non-poor; three percent of the poor.)

About 23 percent of those who live and work in the city, both poor and non-poor, work for the government. Of the poor, 12 percent work for the city, six percent for the state, and three percent for the federal government.

As was mentioned earlier, this is a professional city. But most of the poor are not in professional jobs. The poor tend to be found in certain industries. Among Boston's residents (working in or out of the city) many more of the poor are likely to be in retail trades (18 percent), than the non-poor (12 percent), and fewer are in construction (two percent of the poor and six percent of the non-poor). Twenty-four percent of the poor work in the hotel, personal service, and entertainment industries, compared to 13 percent of the non-poor.

The kinds of jobs in which the poor are employed are also distinctive. For example,

Industry of Employment Boston Residents May Work In or Out of Boston

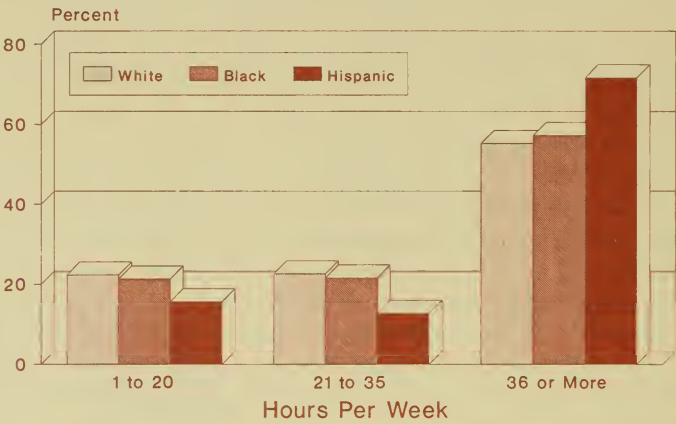


they are more likely to be in cleaning services (14 percent compared to one percent of the non-poor) and they are not represented at all among the ranks of Boston's managers and executives. However, about 21 percent of all Boston residents, both poor and non-poor, work in office support and clerical jobs.

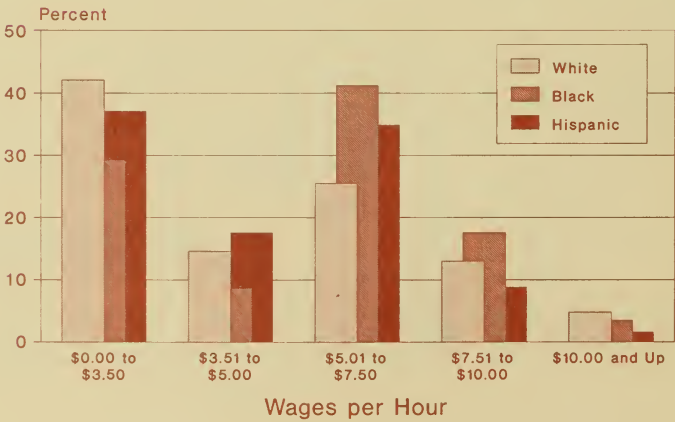
WAGES AND HOURS

For all the poor respondents, not just those who live and work in Boston, about 39 percent work part-time. Half of these work between one and 20 hours a week, the other half

**Working Hours Per Week
Poor Respondents**



**Wages Per Hour
Poor Respondents**



work 20 to 35 hours a week. Sixty-one percent of poor respondents work 36 hours a week or more.

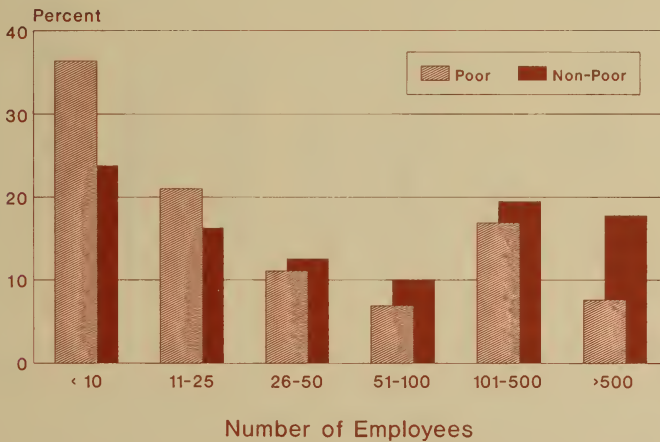
Thirty-six percent of poor respondents are making less than \$3.50 an hour (the minimum wage was \$3.35 per hour at the time of the interview.) Thirteen percent make between \$3.51 and \$5; 34 percent between \$5.01 and \$7.50; 14 percent between \$7.51 and \$10, and three percent make more than \$10 an hour. Thus, less than 20 percent are making \$7.50 an hour or more.

There are some wage differences among the three racial groups covered in this report. Fewer poor blacks have the lowest paying jobs — the ones that pay under \$5 an hour. About 55 percent of poor whites and poor Hispanics make less than \$5 an hour; that figure is about 40 percent for poor blacks. About 40 percent of all poor blacks are in the \$5 to \$7.50 range. In general, poor blacks are not quite as poorly paid as other poor respondents.

EMPLOYER SIZE

The poor are very much more likely to work for a small organization with few employees. About 36 percent of the poor work for companies with ten employees or less, while only 24 percent of the non-poor work for such companies.

Employer Size Boston Residents Working in the City



The non-poor tend to work for large firms. More of the non-poor — 37 percent as opposed to 25 percent — work for a company employing more than 100 people. This is important because smaller businesses sometimes offer fewer benefits, such as health insurance. Also, the wages paid by smaller businesses are sometimes lower.

DOWNTOWN OFFICE JOBS

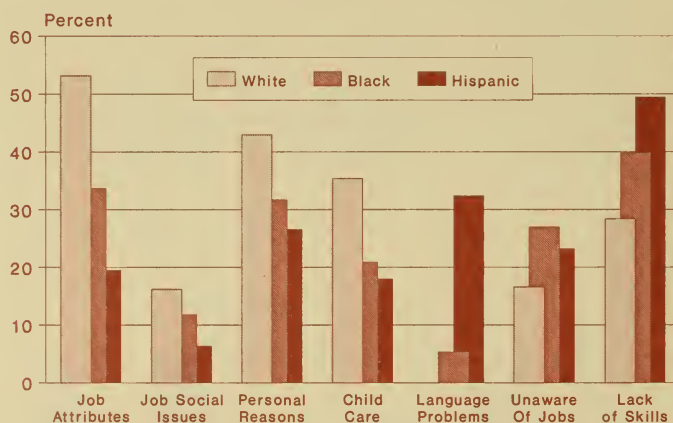
Many residents in the city of Boston work in offices downtown. People both above and below 125 percent of the federal poverty line work as office support staff.

Poor respondents were asked if they had ever considered applying for a job downtown in a bank or office. Seven percent of whites, 15 percent of blacks, and eight percent of Hispanics report applying for such jobs. The most common reason reported for not trying for a downtown office job is that respondents felt they lacked the skills. Thirty-nine percent of the poor give that as a reason. The figure is lower for whites (28 percent), but higher for Hispanics: 50 percent give lack of skills as a reason for not seeking such a job.

Thirty-two percent of Hispanics give language problems as a reason; a tiny fraction (five percent) of blacks, and no whites cite this.

Fifty-three percent of whites, 34 percent of blacks, and 20 percent of Hispanics give characteristics of the job as a reason for not looking into banking or insurance. This, next to lack of skills, is by far the most common response.

Why Not Apply to Office Job Downtown? Poor Respondents

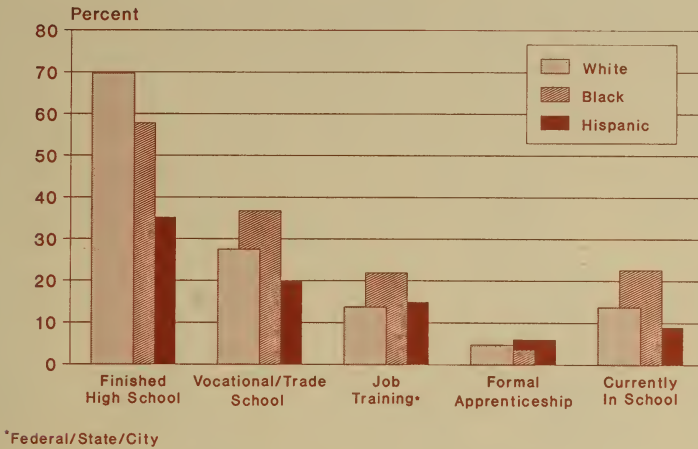


Twenty-seven percent of all respondents mention problems with child care as a reason not to seek an office job. Whites push the curve up — 35 percent of them cite this as a reason, as compared to roughly 20 percent of blacks and Hispanics.

About 24 percent of all respondents say that they do not know about office jobs — would not have any idea how to do one, or go about getting one. But about half of all respondents say they have friends or relatives with downtown office jobs.

Survey participants were also asked if they had friends or relatives who worked in a place in which they would like to work. Blacks are more likely to say yes to this: almost half did, compared to a quarter of whites and about 40 percent of Hispanics.

Training for Work Poor Respondents



EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Forty-seven percent of all poor respondents have not completed high school; a typically standard qualification for employment. This is less true of whites (30 percent) and blacks (42 percent.) Hispanics, as discussed in an earlier chapter, are less well educated; 65 percent have not completed high school.

Many people suggest vocational or trade school as a solution to poverty. Over a quarter (28 percent) of all respondents have tried this, with blacks, at 37 percent, leading the way.

In addition, 22 percent of all poor blacks, 14 percent of poor whites, and 15 percent of poor Hispanics have attended a government job training program. A tiny percentage, about five percent, have attended a formal apprenticeship program.

About 23 percent of all poor black respondents were in some form of schooling at the time of the interview, though not necessarily full time. Fourteen percent of poor whites and nine percent of poor Hispanics are similarly pursuing some form of schooling.

Summary: Chapter Three

- Ninety-five percent of all able-bodied poor respondents are either working, would like to work, or have a health problem or family need that prevents them from working.
- The percentage of those who have never worked is small: eight percent of whites, four percent of blacks, and 15 percent of Hispanics. The majority of these are women with children.
- A job alone is not enough to escape from poverty. Forty-four percent of the poor are working. Another 26 percent have worked in the past two years.
- Thirty-nine percent of the working poor are working part-time. Thirty-six percent are making less than \$3.50 an hour; only 17 percent are making \$7.50 or more.
- A higher proportion of the poor quit their jobs (16 percent versus one percent) because of child care problems, than the non-poor. The poor are less likely to quit because of job characteristics.
- Seventy percent of the poor who enlist the help of someone other than their spouse to care for their children use a relative rather than a day care service.
- Nineteen percent of all poor men and 12 percent of all poor women are permanently, totally disabled.
- The poor and non-poor are equally likely to work in the suburbs outside of Boston.
- The poor are clustered in certain industries: cleaning service, retail trade, and hotels, personal services, and entertainment.
- The poor more often work for small companies (10 employees or less) and less often for large companies (100 people or more).
- Many people on welfare work or are looking for work. Of those on welfare, 22 percent are working, 64 percent would like to be working, and nine percent had looked for work during the four weeks prior to the interview.
- Thirty-seven percent of the poor have never been on welfare. And only 29 percent report being on welfare for all of the last five years.

CHAPTER FOUR

Social Services & the Schools



Social Services & the Schools

Chapter Four begins with the topic of social isolation, the level of connection between poor people and the community and government services designed to be of assistance.

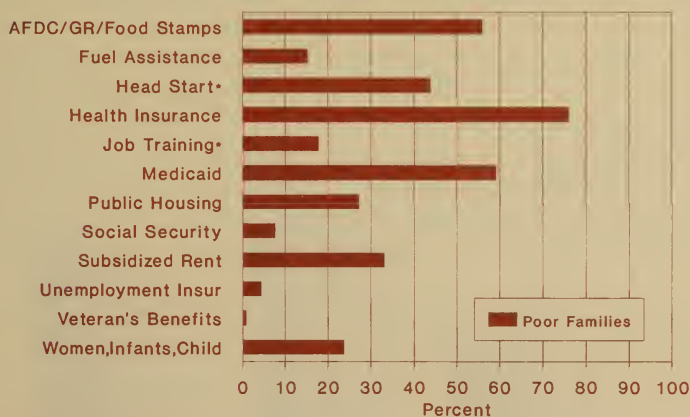
The second part of this chapter focuses on the schools — public, parochial, and private— and examines opinions, perceptions, and enrollment patterns.³

Many poor people experience a kind of social isolation or lack of connection. The majority of those who responded to this survey say they have little knowledge of community organizations which exist to help people with problems. And many could sorely use official services which — for whatever reason — they do not seem to be receiving.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Some of the most important institutions that the poor deal with are the ones that provide them with the necessities of life. It is of course extremely important that all of those who

Services Received Last Year Poor Families



*Received during any past year

³Many of the topics in this chapter relate to family issues, and therefore many comparisons are between poor respondents (who tend to live in families) and non-poor family heads.

are entitled to these services and want them to get them. Of people whose incomes are below 125 percent of the federal poverty line, 56 percent say they received Aid for Dependent Children, General Relief, or Food Stamps in the past year.

Of the poorest respondents, those below the 100 percent of the federal poverty line, 68 percent say that they have received this assistance. (The federal poverty line at the time the respondents were interviewed was \$5,909 for one person, \$7,641 for two, \$9,056 for three, \$11,612 for four, and \$13,743 for five.)

Perhaps the biggest financial problem for the poor is housing, particularly in this city of high rents. Only 60 percent of those with an income below the federal poverty line, and about half of those below 125 percent, get help with their housing costs. However, compared to other cities, Boston is not doing badly. According to a recent report, for U.S. cities as a group, only 29 percent of eligible households received subsidized housing. Those who are not getting help with their rent are paying a lot: an average of \$589 a month in Boston.

"I receive welfare benefits. If I work, they'll take the benefits away. It's mostly the medical benefits I need."

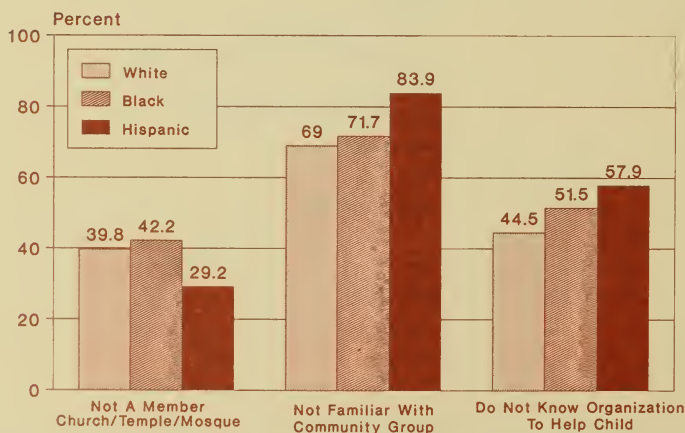
White woman, 32, one child.

Three-quarters of poor respondents (76 percent) have some form of health insurance. A fair number of these receive Medicaid (59 percent at 125 percent of the federal poverty line and 68 percent at 100 percent). Looked at another way, however, this means that about a quarter have no health insurance of any kind.

Not all eligible children are enrolled in Head Start. Poor respondents with children were asked if they have or ever had one or more children enrolled in Head Start; 56 percent say no.

Job training programs are another important service provided by the government to poor people. Eighteen percent of the people in the poor sample have received job training at a government-sponsored program.

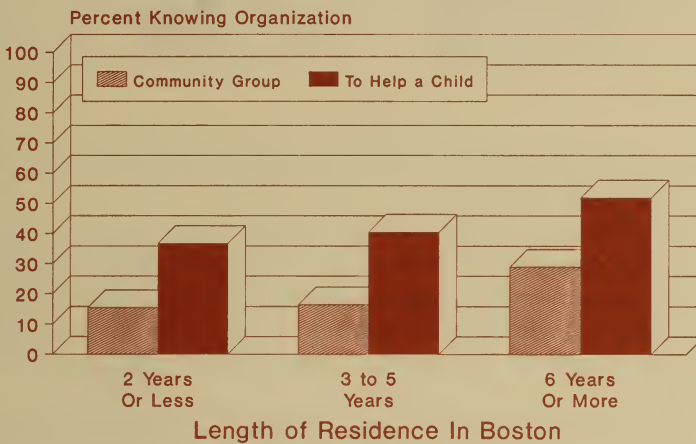
Institutional Connections Poor Families



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Many organizations exist for the purpose of assisting those in need. Some are private, like churches and temples, or the Boys Club and the YMCA. Others are public, like the schools, the police, the courts, the Department of Youth Services, the welfare department, and other social services. In general, there does not seem to be much awareness of these resources.

Knowledge of Community Organization By Length of Residence



When asked, “Are you familiar with any neighborhood or community groups or organizations?” over three-quarters of all poor respondents say no. Non-poor family heads do a little better: about half say they are familiar with at least one community group or organization. Non-poor family heads are also more likely to say that they attend meetings and participate in such organizations.

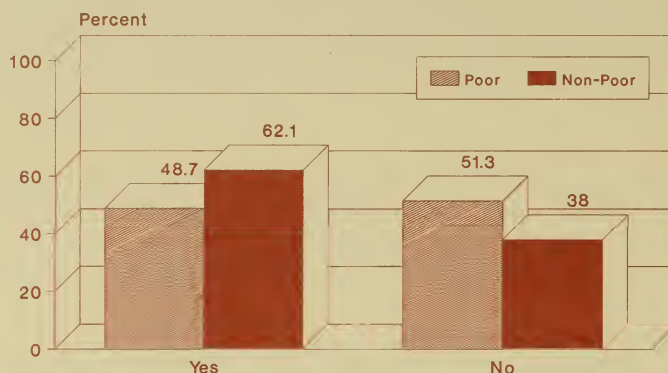
Naturally, people who have lived in Boston a shorter period of time are less familiar with what is going on in the community. And people in some groups seem more connected with what is going on than others. For instance, of all those who have lived in Boston less than two years, 24 percent of poor whites and 20 percent of poor blacks say they are familiar with community agencies, but less than two percent of Hispanics say yes to this question.

People who have been here for a longer time are more likely to be familiar with an agency. Of residents of six years or more, 38 and 39 percent of poor whites and blacks and 21 percent of poor Hispanics are familiar with an agency.

Hispanics who live in public housing seem particularly poorly connected. While about 25 percent of blacks and whites who live in public housing say they are familiar with community organizations, only about eight percent of Hispanics in public housing

Know An Organization To Help Child In Trouble

Family Heads

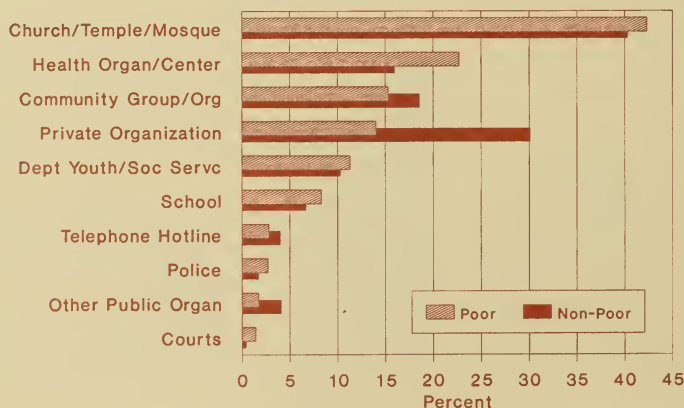


give this answer. The figure for Hispanics who do not live in public housing is lower than the median, but still close, at 20 percent.

Bostonians are a little less isolated where it concerns their children. Survey participants were asked, “If your child or a friend’s child was getting into a lot of trouble, do you know if there are any agencies, churches, or community groups which could help?” Again, non-poor family heads are somewhat more familiar with such programs than the poor. Sixty-two percent say they are familiar with an agency, compared to 49 percent of poor respondents.

Those people familiar with an agency that could help a child in trouble were asked to name a specific one. The most common answer — roughly 40 percent of both poor and

Organizations Mentioned By Those Who Knew of One



non-poor family respondents — is that they would go to a church for help. Poor and non-poor family heads also mention the schools with about equal frequency: about seven to eight percent. There are some differences between the two groups, however. Health organizations and multi-service centers are better known by the poor; such organizations are mentioned by 23 percent of those poor respondents able to name an agency. Only 16 percent of non-poor family heads named a multi-service center. Non-poor family heads prefer private organizations such as the YMCA and the Boys Club. Thirty percent of them name this type of organization, compared to 14 percent of the poor.

Both poor and non-poor are equally likely to mention their church, temple, or mosque as a helpful institution. And both the poor and non-poor families are similar in their church-going patterns, with 21 percent of the poor and 26 percent of non-poor families attending every week, about 38 percent not ever attending church, and the remaining attending occasionally. Over sixty percent of the sample attends their church, temple, or mosque at least once a month. A majority — over 71 percent — of poor Hispanics say that they are members of a church.

School Enrollment Status

Poor Families w/Children 6 to 16



SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

Different demographic groups send their children to different schools. Among families with children, eighty-three percent of poor blacks and 90 percent of poor Hispanics send their children to Boston public schools. That figure is sharply lower for poor whites: only 55 percent of poor whites use the public school system. Poor whites send their children to private or religious schools more often than other poor respondents: 34 percent have at least one child in these types of schools.

Non-poor families show less dramatic but still substantial racial differences. Fifty-four percent of all non-poor families send their children to public school. The rate is

lower for whites — 41 percent; quite a bit higher for blacks — 72 percent; and somewhat higher for Hispanics — 62 percent.

Within both black and Hispanic groups there is quite a difference between the poor and the non-poor in patronage of private or religious schools. Twenty-nine percent of non-poor Hispanics use private or religious schools, compared to four percent of poor Hispanics. Twenty-three percent of non-poor blacks send at least one of their children to private or religious schools, compared to seven percent of poor blacks.

SATISFACTION WITH THE SCHOOLS

The poor are much more negative than the non-poor about the quality of the schooling their children are receiving.

Poor whites are the least satisfied. Fifty percent describe the schools as “fair” or “poor,” though thirty-two percent say that the public schools are “excellent,” or “very good.”

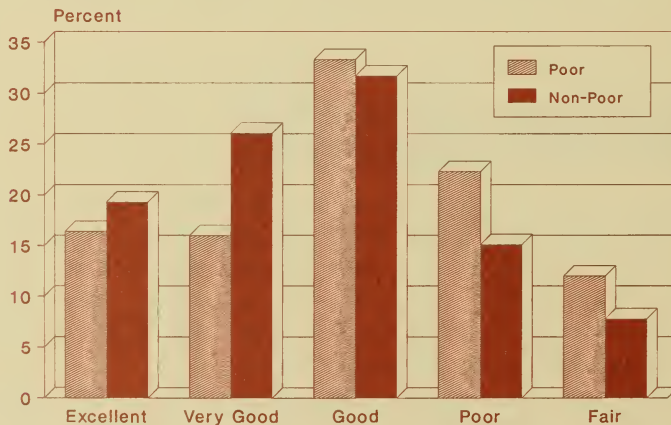
Poor blacks are the next most dissatisfied, with 38 percent describing the schools as “fair” or “poor” — but with, again, about 33 percent saying that the schools are “excellent” or “very good.”

Poor Hispanics take the middle view — about half describe the schools as “good,” with equal numbers above and below.

The most satisfied parents are non-poor whites who send their children to private schools. Eighty-four percent describe their child’s school as “excellent,” or “very good.” Of the 41 percent of non-poor whites whose children do attend the public schools, satisfaction is also high. About 52 percent of this group say the public school their child attends is “excellent,” or “very good.”

Non-poor blacks who send their children to private school are also fairly satisfied; 54

Perceived Quality of Public Schools K-12 Poor & Non-Poor Opinion



percent describe the schools as “excellent,” or “very good;” only 42 percent of non-poor black respondents give the public schools this rating.

Hispanics are more likely to describe the public schools as “good.” On the other hand, 17 percent of non-poor Hispanics say that the public schools are “poor,” making them the most dissatisfied of the non-poor group.

Survey participants were also asked if they had had a private conference with their child’s teacher or guidance counselor, as a measure of parental involvement and connection with their child’s school. Fifty-nine percent of poor respondents with children report that they had. This figure is quite a bit higher for poor whites, almost 78 percent of whom had a conference with someone from their child’s school.

“If I could find an affordable school for my son and a good job for me. They want \$500 a month for the school and I can’t afford it.”

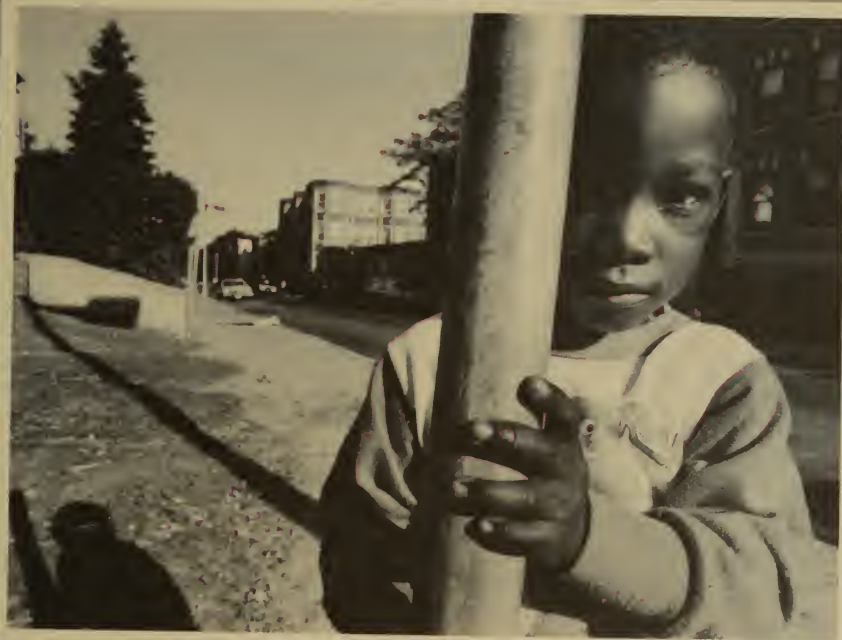
Single black woman, 26, three year old son, works at a fast food restaurant, asked what would make her life better.

Summary: Chapter Four

- Fifty-six percent of the poor receive Food Stamps, Aid for Dependent Children, or General Relief.
- About half of poor respondents receive either rent subsidies or live in public housing. Those who do not receive assistance pay an average rent of \$589 a month.
- A quarter of poor respondents have no health insurance of any kind.
- Nearly three-quarters of all poor respondents are not familiar with any community group or organization. Hispanics who live in public housing are particularly disconnected; over 90 percent say they are not familiar with any community group or organization.
- Asked if they know of an organization to help a child in trouble, half of the poor say no. Black respondents are somewhat more aware of community services than other groups.
- Of those who do know of an organization to help a child in trouble, over 40 percent of poor and non-poor family heads name their church, temple, or mosque. Twenty-three percent of the poor and 16 percent of the non-poor mention health organizations and multi-service centers. Fourteen percent of the poor and 30 percent of the non-poor family heads cite private organizations like the YMCA and the Boys Club.
- Eighty percent of all poor families send their children to Boston public schools. The figure is lower for whites; 55 percent of poor white families use the public school system.
- Most parents describe their child's school as "good" or better. Poor whites whose children attend public school are the most dissatisfied.

CHAPTER FIVE

Dreams & Barriers



Dreams & Barriers

Most people do not answer questions in simple yes or no terms. Even when they know that the interviewer wants answer A, B, or C, they often explain in some detail the full richness of their experience.

And interviewers tend to scrawl such comments all over the margins of the survey book. The quotations included here, plucked out at random, provide a different kind of insight into the lives of the poor.

We would like to introduce you to some of the people behind the numbers, anonymously, of course. For instance, one respondent, an elderly black woman, has worked for many years, cleaning house almost full-time for the same family, for \$100 a week. Another older woman, who once picked cotton and then worked as a housekeeper, lists the lowest price she would consider accepting for her services as “\$6 a day.”

Then, there is the unemployed construction worker who reads to his son every night, and the grandmother who is described as “always there for the kids, 24 hours a day.” And, the illiterate woman, who, asked if she reads to her children, says that she takes out the VCR Educational Storybook each night before they go to bed.

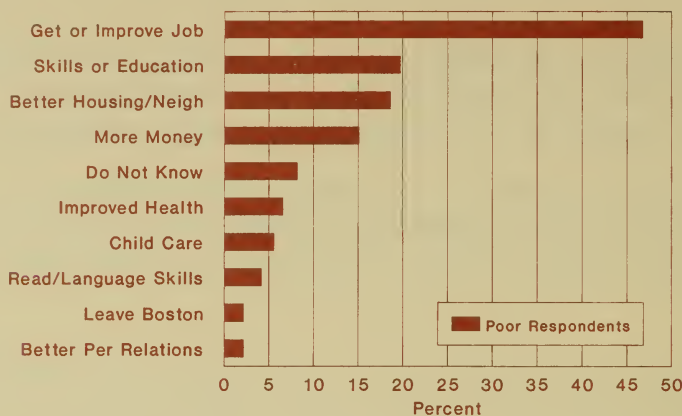
Some people are in situations that might seem difficult to others, but are apparently not to them — highlighting the coping skills, or possibly, low expectations, of the poor respondents. The most interesting answers usually relate to the last question in the survey, when people were asked what would make their lives better. One young and poor Hispanic woman, living with her parents, says, “We’re pretty happy. Maybe moving to a warmer climate.” A divorced black woman, with a first-grade education and an income of \$8,000 a year, says, “Nothing really. I’d like a better couch.”

Some people mention hopes and dreams that are very conventional, the sort of thing a more privileged person might take for granted. For instance, one middle-aged single black woman says she would like a bank account. A young black woman from the West Indies would like a credit card. “Stores will not take your check even if you have the money, if you don’t have a credit card. People have to give you a chance,” she says. One young white woman says it would improve her life “to own a house. To get a good job and own a house.” The interviewer comments, “She said this wistfully, like you’d talk about wanting to navigate a space shuttle.”

Many people have ideas about changes in the wider world that they feel would be to their benefit. A divorced 59-year-old white woman suggests “a program for people who don’t have money to pay for more schooling.” “More jobs; better jobs for everyone, not just people who are skilled. For anybody who wants to get up and work,” says a 28-year-old black man, a songwriter.

Certain obvious answers appear over and over again. Almost half of all poor respondents say their lives would be most improved by getting a job, or getting a better job. Almost 20 percent give acquiring more skills or education as an answer. An additional

Needed To Improve Life Poor Respondents



four percent say that language and reading skills in particular need improving. About 19 percent say that moving to a better neighborhood, or acquiring better housing, would make a difference in their lives. Only 15 percent say simply, “More money.” Most people seem to take the conventional position that some concrete step needs to be taken before you get more money.

It is only appropriate to end this report by letting the poor speak for themselves, telling of their dreams, their problems, and disappointments:

“Sometimes when you look for a job they just look at you and say, ‘There aren’t any jobs....’ I would like to go to college and learn to be an electronic technician.”

Black man, 25, single, high school graduate, hotel janitor, from Haiti.

“I would like a vacation with pay.”

White woman, 45, separated, home health care worker, making \$600 a month.

“Get a job. I’d do anything.”

White man, 41, married, four children; telling what would make his life better.

“My son is 10. I give him the keys. I work down the street and tell him to call me if there’s a problem.”

Hispanic woman, 26, single, two children.

“Because it was only on weekends and the first weekend was my son’s christening, so they hired somebody else.”

*White woman, 36, divorced, two children;
she had been asked why she hadn’t gotten a job she had applied for.*

“A better job. A good salary. \$14,000 a year, I don’t want to be greedy.”

*Hispanic woman, 44, separated, teenage daughter;
she had been asked what would make her life better.*

“I was pregnant and my uniform didn’t fit.”

Black woman, 19, single, explaining why she quit her job.

“I want to take a course in dental hygiene. After graduation, I can get a good job, making good money.”

White woman, 39, single.

“I call taking care of the twins work, but I was actually looking for work, too.”

*Black woman, 24, single, mother of eight month old twins;
she had been asked if she had worked the previous week.*

“I can’t read or write, so I can’t look in the papers.”

*Black woman, 35, single, illiterate, who looked for a job every week last year;
asked if she looked in the newspaper “Help Wanted” ads.*

“They never call you back when they say they will.”

Black woman, 21, looking for work.

“I felt that the work didn’t have much value. I was looking for a job with value.”

White man, 26, social worker.

“Oh, God, I’d give anything to be working now.”

Black woman, 34, separated, temporarily disabled.

“I’m scared to change. I have bills to pay, responsibilities.”

Black woman, 29, divorced, two small children.

“I just want to get better. I want to support the children, not be dependent.”

White woman, 42, divorced, three children, no alimony, cancer.

“In order to look for a job, I would have to take four or five days off from work, and I can’t afford to lose four day’s pay.”

Black man, 26, married, one child, gas station attendant.

“Like José Martí, a famous Cuban poet, says, you can’t learn to teach, you have it in your blood, you are born with that skill. I studied many years. . . . Welfare is like a chair, and I want to finish with that.”

*Hispanic woman, 33, teacher with graduate degree,
recent immigrant from Cuba.*

“It’s difficult to live on \$1,200 a month. I’m not eligible for anything. They tell me I get too much. When you apply for Food Stamps, they take into account what goes in and not what necessities have to come out. Rent is \$800; that only leaves \$400 to live on.”

White woman, 40, married, three children.

“Find an apartment with rent not so high so I could spend more money on my kids.”

Black woman, 29, with two small children, earning \$1,042 a month, paying \$800 a month in rent; she had been asked what would make her life better.

“When you are sick, life has no sense.”

Hispanic woman, 38, divorced.

“I need more money to survive. I just have enough to survive. Only just pay the bills; there’s nothing left for anything else.”

White woman, 59, widowed, disabled.

“If I could find a job and get some help.” Interviewer: “What kind of help?”
“Just help.”

Black man, 26, three dependents; he had been asked what would make his life better.

Methodology

The Boston Poverty Survey

The Boston Poverty Survey was a combination telephone and door-to-door survey of both poor and non-poor in Boston. The interviews were conducted in the winter of 1988 and the early spring of 1989 by the University of Massachusetts Center for Survey Research, using a questionnaire developed by Professor Paul Osterman.

Three separate sampling frames were utilized. The first sampling frame was based upon a city-wide Random Digit Dial (RDD) approach. A total of 14,135 households were called and administered a five-minute screening interview. If the family's income fell below 125 percent of the federal poverty line (and met other conditions described below) a thirty-minute questionnaire was administered. A total of 862 of these RDD poverty interviews were conducted. In addition, a random sample of 903 non-poor families were administered a ten-minute questionnaire. The response rate to the screening questionnaire was .857, to the poverty questionnaire, .671, and to the non-poverty questionnaire, .794.

The second sampling frame, created independently, was designed to determine the bias introduced by the phone survey method. An area probability sample was created, based upon a listing of city blocks and residences on those blocks. A sample of residences was drawn and an attempt was made to contact each residence by phone. If that was not possible, a field worker went out to conduct the interview. A total of 1,440 households were contacted using this method, and from this group, 103 poverty interviews were conducted. The response rate to the screening questionnaire was .845 and to the poverty questionnaire (among those eligible), .665.

The final sampling frame was similar in structure to the second, in that it was geographic and person-to-person, but it was aimed at generating a supplement to the Hispanic interviews generated by the other interviews described above. Hence this sample was limited to Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End. A total of 1,341 households were contacted, and 100 poverty interviews with Hispanics conducted. The response rate to the screening interview was .935 and to the poverty interview, .877.

In summary, a total of 16,916 households in Boston were contacted for screening interviews, and a total of 1,065 poverty interviews and 903 non-poverty interviews were conducted.

In addition, as noted in the preface, we are currently completing additional interviews with two samples: Asians who do not speak English and an additional set of non-poor Hispanics.

The data reported in the body of this publication are drawn from several combinations of the samples described above, as follows:

1. Poverty rate data and city demographics are taken from various combinations of the first two samples, the RDD and city-wide screening interviews. The 125 percent poverty rates and the estimate of the size of the Boston population are taken from a file which combines (with appropriate weights) the two samples. This approach is used because it provides an adequate number of single people to develop poverty estimates for this group. The size of this file is 12,659.

The data on the racial composition of the city is taken from the field sample alone because the data show that Hispanics are overrepresented among those with no telephones. The size of this file is 1,132.

Federal poverty rates are calculated by combining the information just described on the 125 percent poverty rates with data from the poverty interviews on the proportion (by race) of the 125 percent poverty population which falls above and below the federal poverty level.

2. For the poverty population as a whole and for poor whites and blacks broken out separately, a combined file (with appropriate weights) of the RDD and area samples is used. The sample size of this file is 965 total poor, 297 white poor, and 372 black poor.
3. When poor Hispanics are analyzed separately, a combined file of the city-wide RDD poverty sample, the city-wide area sample, and the area Hispanic oversample is used (with appropriate weights). The sample size of this file is 373.
4. When the non-poor are analyzed as a group, the non-poor RDD sample is employed. The sample size is 903.
5. When statements about the city as a whole are made (other than the 125 percent poverty rates and basic demographics), all the poverty files (except for the Hispanic area oversample) are combined with the non-poor sample and appropriate weights are employed. The sample size for this file is 1,868.

There are several additional limitations in the sampling. First, interviews were conducted in English and in Spanish and hence non-English speakers of other languages were not included. As already noted, we are now conducting Asian language interviews.

Second, residents of institutions (such as college dormitories, prisons, army facilities) are excluded, as are the homeless and others with no fixed address. These limitations aside, the screening interviews are a representative sample of the Boston population. However, for the longer poverty and non-poverty interviews, additional limitations were imposed. Households in which no adult was less than 61 years old were excluded (unless that household had responsibility for a child). Households headed by full-time college students were also excluded. Finally, households in which the head was less than 18 years old were excluded.

Confidence intervals depend upon both sample size and the actual proportion in the underlying population. If we let the actual proportion be .5 (the most conservative choice indicating, for example, the actual proportion of families with some characteristic — say knowledge of a community group — is .5) then the following 95 percent confidence intervals apply:

Statements about the poverty rate	± 1.0%
Statements about all poor	± 3.1%
Statements about the white poor	± 5.7%
Statements about the black poor	± 5.1%
Statements about the Hispanic poor	± 5.1%
Statements about the non-poor	± 3.1%
Comparisons between the poor and the non-poor	± 4.7%
Comparisons between racial groups among the poor	± 7.5%

A final issue concerns a possible undercount of men, particularly minority men. This is a problem which has concerned many researchers. In order to judge the extent, if any, of this problem, we calculated sex ratios both for the Boston Survey and for central city populations in the 1987 Current Population Survey (again, with the same sample restrictions as we employed). These calculations are for the entire population. Focusing on the poverty sample would be inappropriate in that one effect of a strong economy may be to improve the lot of men relative to women and, if true, this would distort a comparison between Boston and the rest of the nation. The ratios of adult women to men are displayed below:

	<i>Boston Survey</i>	<i>Current Population Survey</i>
All	1.17	1.14
Whites	1.06	1.05
Blacks	1.66	1.48
Hispanics	.99	1.10

It is apparent that the Boston Poverty Survey does find, particularly for blacks, considerably fewer men than women. At the same time, the Boston Survey tracks the pattern in the CPS quite closely. To some extent, the sex disparity represents reality, and to some extent, it reflects an undercount. It is difficult to judge the relative importance of these two effects, but at least our results are essentially as good as those drawn from far more complex and expensive CPS surveys.

Glossary of Terms

Categories of Respondents

Household: A household is the basic interviewing unit for this sample. That is, the survey represents a random sample of Boston's households (subject to the limitations described in the section, Methodology). A household is defined as either a single person or as a family (these terms are defined below). If two single people or two families share the same housing unit, they are considered to be two households.

Family: Two or more persons related by blood or adoption.

Single Person, One Person: A single person could be considered a one-person family, but to maintain consistency the term family is only used for two or more persons.

Head of Family: This is an adult member of a family. The head was determined by first asking which adults (under the age of 60) in the family had either worked or looked for work in the past year. If only one person fit this description, then that person is called the head. If more than one fit the description, then the head was randomly selected. If no person fit the description, then the head is chosen randomly from the adults (one or more) in the family.

Respondent: The head of the family is the respondent. If the household consists of a single person, then that person is the respondent.

White, Black, Hispanic: Respondents were asked to classify themselves by race. The racial categories are mutually exclusive; that is, a respondent can be one of these but not more than one.

Central City: This is a Census term which refers to the largest city in a metropolitan area. For example, New York City is the central city in that area, Boston in this area, Chicago in that area, and so on. There are several hundred central cities in the country.

Survey Data

Survey Results are arranged by topic:

Magnitudes

Poverty Standards

Poverty Rates

Population Distributions

Demographic Characteristics

Household Structure

Employment & Work History

Service Provision

Institutional Connections

School Enrollment

Perceived School Quality

Boston Magnitudes 1989

	TOTAL
Poor Households	21,200
Poor Whites	16,100
Poor Blacks	20,900
Poor Hispanics	16,000
Poor Other	18,500
Poor Families	17,000
Poor Children Under 6	14,500
Poor Children 6-17	20,900
Poor Single Adults	4,200
Poor Adults in Families	31,900
Poor Individuals	71,500

Poverty Standards
(income level below which family is considered poor)

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN FAMILY	INCOME FEDERAL STANDARD	INCOME 125% OF FED STD
1	\$5,909	\$7,500
2	\$7,641	\$9,500
3	\$9,056	\$11,500
4	\$11,612	\$14,500
5	\$13,743	\$17,500

Change in Poverty Rates Boston & U.S. Central Cities 1980 & 1989

Boston

	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
Families	23.5	19.0
Single People	22.5	5.9

U.S. Central Cities

	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
Families	19.7	22.2
Single People	24.5	25.8

Poverty Rates Federal Standard

Boston - 1980

	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Singles	17.2	14.3	26.5	28.0
Single Parents	51.2	46.9	49.9	67.3
Families	18.0	10.6	29.1	42.9

Boston - 1989

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	3.5	2.0	5.3	12.8
Single Parents	25.9	18.2	23.1	48.1
Families	11.5	5.6	13.4	24.8

U.S. Central Cities - 1980

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	19.9	14.0	30.8	32.7
Single Parents	43.6	26.4	48.2	61.5
Families	15.0	6.8	25.9	28.6

U.S Central Cities - 1987

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	19.0	15.0	31.5	24.3
Single Parents	48.8	28.9	58.2	60.5
Families	17.7	7.4	32.3	30.7

Poverty Rates 125% of Federal Standard

Boston - 1980

	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Singles	22.5	19.3	32.3	37.9
Single Parents	60.5	56.0	59.9	74.0
Families	23.5	14.5	36.8	52.7

Boston - 1989

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	5.9	3.2	9.0	23.0
Single Parents	40.5	25.7	35.2	78.7
Families	19.0	8.4	22.3	45.4

U.S. Central Cities - 1980

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	24.5	17.8	37.0	38.9
Single Parents	52.4	33.9	58.0	70.1
Families	19.7	9.5	33.0	37.6

U.S Central Cities - 1987

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Singles	25.8	20.9	37.2	34.0
Single Parents	55.6	34.3	65.3	68.9
Families	22.2	10.5	38.2	38.8

Poverty Rates
Single-Parent Families
125% of Federal Standard
Boston 1980 & 1989

RACE	1980	1980 POVERTY RATE	1989	1989 POVERTY RATE
	% of FAMILIES THAT ARE SINGLE PARENTS		% of FAMILIES THAT ARE SINGLE PARENTS	
White	12.8	56.0	17.5	25.7
Black	44.7	59.9	49.6	35.2
Hispanic	42.1	74.1	44.2	78.2

Poverty Rates Children Under 6 Federal Standard Boston 1980 & 1989

	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
Poor Children	39.8	21.6
	% of 1980 TOTAL BY RACE	% of 1989 TOTAL BY RACE
White Children	28.9	11.8
Black Children	44.7	17.5
Hispanic Children	62.2	41.5

Poverty Rates Children Under 6 125% of Federal Standard Boston 1980 & 1989

	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
Poor Children	47.6	35.7
	% of 1980 TOTAL BY RACE	% of 1989 TOTAL BY RACE
White Children	35.3	17.5
Black Children	53.1	33.0
Hispanic Children	72.8	73.2

Population Distribution by Race Boston 1980 & 1989

	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
White	63.6	54.9
Black	24.8	24.4
Hispanic	7.6	9.9
Other	4.0	11.0

Family Distribution by Race Boston 1980 & 1989

RACE	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
White Families	63.4	54.5
Black Families	25.6	28.0
Hispanic Families	7.5	11.0
Other	3.5	6.5

Household Distribution by Race Boston 1980 & 1989

RACE	% of 1980 TOTAL	% of 1989 TOTAL
White Households	69.4	67.9
Black Households	22.1	20.5
Hispanic Households	5.8	6.7
Other	2.7	4.8

Family Distribution by Race All & Poor Families

Boston 1980

RACE	% of ALL FAMILIES	% of POOR FAMILIES
White Families	63.4	39.1
Black Families	25.6	39.9
Hispanic Families	7.5	16.8
Other	3.6	4.1

Boston 1989

RACE	% of ALL FAMILIES	% of POOR FAMILIES
White Families	54.5	29.3
Black Families	28.0	34.6
Hispanic Families	11.0	27.5
Other	6.5	8.6

Age Distribution
Boston 1989

AGE	% of ALL ADULTS	% of SINGLE ADULTS	% of FAMILY ADULTS
18-24 Years	20.3	25.6	16.2
25-30 Years	28.1	34.9	23.4
31-40 Years	30.1	26.0	33.0
41-50 Years	13.6	6.9	18.3
51-60 Years	7.0	6.0	7.7

Educational Distribution
Adults
Boston 1989

YEARS IN SCHOOL	% of ALL ADULTS	% of SINGLE ADULTS	% of FAMILY ADULTS
Less than 12	15.7	7.6	21.4
12 (High Sch Grad)	27.2	16.2	35.0
13-15	17.2	16.0	18.0
16 (College Grad)	27.3	45.1	14.8
More than 16	12.3	14.9	10.5

Demographic Characteristics Adults in Poor Families Boston 1989

Age

YEARS OLD	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
18-24	25.3	15.1	27.6	29.5
25-30	21.7	29.2	19.5	20.3
31-40	29.5	28.1	28.4	28.5
41-50	16.2	15.1	16.4	17.3
51-60	7.0	12.3	7.5	4.2

Education

YEARS	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Less than 12	48.1	31.2	42.1	64.9
12 (High Sch Grad)	36.3	42.6	42.1	26.1
13-15	9.9	9.8	13.7	6.8
16 (College Grad)	4.3	11.4	2.1	1.4
More than 16	1.5	5.0	0.0	0.8

Sex

GENDER	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Male	23.2	17.5	19.4	31.2
Female	76.4	82.5	80.6	68.8

Demographic Characteristics Adults in Non-Poor Families Boston 1989

Age

YEARS OLD	% of TOTAL
18-24	12.7
25-30	24.2
31-40	34.7
41-50	19.3
51-60	8.1

Education

YEARS IN SCHOOL	% of TOTAL
Less than 12	9.5
12 (High Sch Grad)	34.6
13-15	21.7
16 (College Grad)	19.6
More than 16	14.7

Sex

GENDER	% of TOTAL
Male	44.5
Female	55.5

Household Structure

Boston 1980 & 1989

1980 All Households

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	% of TOTAL
Single	44.1
Single Parent	12.9
Married, No Children	8.4
Married, With Children	17.8
Other Living Arrangements	16.8

1989 Poor & Non-Poor Households

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	% of TOTAL	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
Single	44.4	15.1	48.4
Single Parent	16.8	54.2	11.7
Married, No Children	9.7	1.4	8.0
Married, With Children	16.7	20.2	16.2
Other Living Arrangements	12.0	8.0	12.6

1989 by Race, Poor & Non-Poor Households Combined

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Single	54.8	19.7	28.4
Single Parent	7.8	39.7	31.6
Married, No Children	7.6	6.7	6.5
Married, With Children	14.9	16.9	25.7
Other Living Arrangements	11.4	16.3	6.5

Income Distribution By Household Structure Boston 1989

INCOME LEVEL	% of ALL HOUSE- HOLDS	% of FAMILIES	% of SINGLE PEOPLE
Less than \$5,000	1.9	1.8	2.1
\$5,000-10,000	10.1	10.6	9.2
\$10,000-15,000	10.2	10.4	9.8
\$15,000-20,000	12.0	10.2	14.0
\$20,000-30,000	20.9	16.6	25.3
\$30,000-40,000	15.4	13.4	17.0
\$40,000-60,000	15.4	19.4	10.2
More than \$60,000	13.2	16.3	9.1

Employment Status Adult Respondents Boston 1989

STATUS	% of ALL ADULTS	% of SINGLE ADULTS	% of FAMILY ADULTS
School	2.2	0.7	3.2
Looking for Work	3.9	3.4	4.3
Permanently Disabled	4.1	4.5	3.9
Keeping House	10.1	1.5	16.2
Working	71.2	79.0	65.8

Wages & Hours Poor Respondents Boston 1989

WAGE	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
\$3.50 or Less	36.0	42.1	29.2	37.1
\$3.51-\$5.00	12.8	14.6	8.6	17.6
\$5.01-\$7.50	34.0	25.5	41.2	34.9
\$7.51-\$10.00	14.0	13.0	17.6	8.8
\$10.00 or More	3.2	4.8	3.5	1.6

HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
1 to 20	19.7	22.3	21.3	15.6
21 to 35	19.3	22.6	21.6	12.7
36 or More	61.0	55.2	57.2	71.7

Training for Work Poor Respondents Boston 1989

TRAINING	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Completed High School	53.3	69.7	57.8	35.1
Attended Vocational Or Trade School	28.3	27.5	36.7	19.8
Attended Fed/ State/City Job Training Program	17.7	13.7	21.9	14.9
Attended Formal Apprenticeship	5.0	4.7	3.5	6.0
In School Time Of Interview	16.4	13.7	22.6	8.9

Work-History Poor Respondents* Boston 1989

PERIOD WORKING	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
At Time of Interview	43.6	31.4	52.4	47.3
Sometime in 1988	20.4	25.0	20.3	16.1
Sometime in 1987	5.5	10.6	5.0	2.5
Sometime in 1986	5.9	10.1	4.9	2.9
Before 1986	14.7	15.4	13.5	16.4
Never Worked	9.9	7.5	3.9	14.8

*Excluding the permanently disabled

Employment Status Poor Respondents Boston 1989

ACTIVITY	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Worked Last Week	37.8	26.9	45.3	41.6
Looked Last Week	7.9	7.9	9.1	5.2
Looked During 3 Weeks Before Last Week	4.8	5.2	3.4	4.6
Permanent Total Disability	13.5	17.1	13.8	12.2
Taking Care Of House/Family	28.1	31.2	20.4	32.8
In School	6.7	11.1	6.8	2.9
Other	1.1	1.5	1.2	0.7

Welfare History
Years in Past Five Receiving Welfare
Poor Respondents
Boston 1989

YEARS ON WELFARE	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Zero Years	37.0	33.1	38.1	39.5
One Year	13.1	15.6	13.0	10.9
Two Years	10.8	10.3	9.5	10.8
Three Years	6.6	6.0	8.8	5.0
Four Years	3.5	4.5	2.2	2.7
All Five Years	28.9	30.4	28.4	31.1

Employment Sector Residents Working in the City Boston 1989

Poor & Non-Poor

SECTOR	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
City Govt	12.0	9.8
State Govt	5.8	7.3
Federal Govt	3.4	5.8
Self-Employed	3.0	8.6
Private Sector	75.7	68.4

By Race, Poor & Non-Poor Combined

SECTOR	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
City Govt	10.1	10.8	9.8	6.1
State Govt	7.1	2.6	17.9	9.4
Federal Govt	5.6	5.1	6.6	6.0
Private Sector	69.2	71.9	60.5	71.7
Self-Employed	8.0	9.6	5.3	6.8

**Industry of Employment
All Residents
Boston 1989**
(work location may be in or out of the city)

SECTOR	% of TOTAL	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
Agriculture & Mining	0.2	0.0	0.2
Legal Services	2.0	1.1	2.1
Wholesale Trade	0.9	1.3	0.8
Construction	5.7	1.7	6.1
Real Estate	1.9	2.3	1.8
Social Services	4.8	3.0	5.0
Finance/Insurance	8.0	3.2	8.5
Non-Profit Services	3.9	4.0	3.9
Transportation/Utilities	7.9	5.0	8.2
Government Services	8.1	6.6	8.3
Educational Services	9.6	9.1	9.7
Manufacturing	8.7	9.3	8.6
Health Services	11.7	11.5	11.7
Retail Trade	12.7	18.1	12.1
Hotels/Personal Services Entertainment	14.0	23.8	12.9

Industry of Employment All Residents Working in the City Boston 1989

SECTOR	% of RESIDENTS
Wholesale Trade	0.7
Real Estate	2.4
Legal Services	2.7
Social Services	4.8
Non-Profit Services	4.1
Manufacturing	6.0
Construction	5.5
Finance/Insurance	9.7
Transportation/Utilities	7.8
Government Services	8.8
Educational Services	9.6
Retail Trade	10.6
Hotels/Personal Services	
Entertainment	13.6
Health Services	13.7

Occupation All Residents Boston 1989

OCCUPATION	% of ALL RESIDENTS	% of FAMILY ALL HEADS	% of POOR
Managers/Exec.	13.1	11.1	0.0
Other Technicians	3.0	2.3	0.1
Health Technicians	1.3	0.9	0.8
Health Professionals	3.5	3.0	0.9
Other Professionals	6.6	4.5	1.1
Sales, Not Retail	4.5	3.8	1.1
Construction Crafts	4.3	4.3	1.5
Scientists/Engineers	4.4	2.5	1.6
Transportation & Moving Operators	2.7	3.3	2.5
Skilled Blue Collar	3.3	4.3	2.7
Private Household Service	1.0	1.4	2.8
Protective Service	2.3	2.2	3.1
Other Service (e.g. hairdressers)	3.1	3.6	3.6
Laborers, Helpers	2.1	2.7	4.4
Health Service	1.5	1.9	5.4
Operators, Assemblers	2.8	3.2	5.9
Teachers & Professors	5.8	6.6	8.2
Sales, Retail	4.2	4.9	9.0
Food Service	6.8	7.5	9.8
Cleaning Service	2.4	3.0	14.2
Office Support & Clerical	21.4	22.9	21.3

Residence & Job Location Adult Residents Boston 1989

LOCATION & JOB	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR	% of NON-POOR FAMILY
Live and Work Downtown	8.4	14.0	5.5
Live in Neighborhoods Work Downtown	31.5	30.0	31.7
Live and Work in Own Neighborhood	16.9	11.3	12.8
Live in Own Neighborhood Work in Other Neighborhood	12.8	13.2	17.3
Live in Boston Work Outside Boston	30.4	31.5	32.7

*Downtown is a part of Boston

*Neighborhoods within city limits

Employer Size Residents Working in the City Boston 1989

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
10 or Less	36.4	23.8
11-25	21.0	16.3
26-50	11.1	12.6
51-100	6.9	10.1
101-500	16.9	19.5
500 or More	7.6	17.8

Reasons for Not Applying for an Office Job Poor Respondents Boston 1989

REASONS	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Characteristics of Job	35.9	53.2	33.7	19.5
Social Issues on the Job	11.9	16.2	11.8	6.4
Personal Reason other than Children	35.2	43.0	31.7	26.6
Child Care Problems	26.6	35.4	20.9	18.0
Language Problems	11.1	0.0	5.3	32.4
No Knowledge of Jobs	23.5	16.6	27.0	23.2
Lack of Skills	39.1	28.4	39.8	49.5

Job Turnover Reasons Cited for Quitting Work Boston 1989

REASON	% of POOR TOTAL	% of POOR WHITE	% of POOR BLACK	% of POOR HISPANIC
Social Issues on the Job	12.5	22.1	11.1	6.8
Child Care Problems	15.6	19.4	15.9	9.7
Personal Reason, other than Children	40.7	41.5	43.0	30.4
Characteristics of the Job	68.3	63.0	69.5	72.9

REASON	% of NON-POOR RESPONDENTS	% of NON-POOR ADULT HEADS OF FAMILIES
Social Issues on the Job	31.0	25.6
Child Care Problems	1.3	2.9
Personal Reason, other than Children	23.1	32.9
Characteristics of the Job	86.2	83.4

Difficulties with Outside* Day Care Boston 1989

INDICATING SERIOUS OR VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH:	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
Getting Enough Hours Covered	19.3	78.2
Quality	29.9	77.5
Cost	41.4	62.2

*Outside = Outside of Home

Percentage of Monthly Income Spent on Housing Poor Respondents Boston 1989

	<u>% of INCOME</u>
Poor Respondents	52
Poor Respondents Not Living in Public Housing Or Receiving Rent Subsidies	63

Years Living Continuously in Boston Poor Respondents 1989

<u>YEARS IN BOSTON</u>	<u>% of TOTAL</u>	<u>% of WHITE</u>	<u>% of BLACK</u>	<u>% of HISPANIC</u>
2 or Less	14.9	20.2	10.6	13.6
3 to 4	6.7	5.3	2.6	11.8
5 or More	78.3	74.5	86.8	74.7

Service Coverage Poor Families Boston 1989

SERVICE	% of POOR FEDERAL STANDARD	% of POOR 125% FED STANDARD
Veterans' Benefits	1.1	0.8
Unemployment Insurance	2.7	4.3
Social Security	7.8	7.6
Supplement Security Income	9.8	7.6
Fuel Assistance	16.0	15.3
*Job Training	19.5	17.7
Women Infants & Children	24.4	23.7
Living in Public Housing	30.1	27.2
Subsidized Rent	42.5	33.1
*At Least One Child In Head Start	44.8	43.8
Food Stamps	55.6	46.1
Public Housing or Subsidized Rent	60.1	49.6
AFDC, General Relief or Food Stamps	67.7	56.0
Medicaid	67.7	59.2
Some Form of Health Insurance	76.6	75.9

*Indicates service received during any previous year

Institutional Connection Family Respondents Boston 1989

CHURCH/ TEMPLE/MOSQUE	% of POOR FAMILIES	% of NON-POOR FAMILIES
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Not a Member	37.5	37.8
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MEMBER ATTENDANCE

Rarely	12.1	11.3
1 Time a Month	8.2	10.0
2 Times a Month	14.9	9.0
3 Times a Month	6.1	6.6
4 Times a Month	21.1	25.5

COMMUNITY GROUPS, FAMILIARITY & ATTENDANCE

Not Familiar With Any	75.9	47.3
Familiar Attend Reg	8.3	12.7
Attend Occasionally	6.7	15.4
Attend Rarely	3.1	10.9
Never Attend	6.0	13.7

IF CHILD OR FRIEND'S CHILD WAS IN TROUBLE, DO YOU KNOW OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT COULD HELP?

Yes	48.7	62.1
No	51.3	38.0

Knowledge of Community Organizations

Poor Respondents

Boston 1989

Knowledge of Community Group

HOUSING TYPE	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Live in Public Housing	21.3	26.3	25.4	7.5
Do Not Live in Public Housing	27.5	25.3	28.6	20.5

Knowledge of Community Group To Help a Child in Trouble

HOUSING TYPE	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Live in Public Housing	50.1	61.8	53.8	34.2
Do Not Live in Public Housing	48.5	55.7	45.9	44.4

Knowledge of Community Organizations By Length of Residence Poor Respondents Boston 1989

Knowledge of Community Group

YEARS OF RESIDENCE	% of TOTAL KNOW GROUP	% of WHITE KNOW GROUP	% of BLACK KNOW GROUP	% of HISPANIC KNOW GROUP
2 or Less	15.4	23.6	19.9	1.8
3 to 5	16.4	28.0	54.2	8.5
6 or More	28.9	39.1	37.8	20.7

Knowledge of Community Group To Help a Child In Trouble

YEARS OF RESIDENCE	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
2 or Less	36.7	39.9	45.7	34.9
3 to 5	40.5	36.4	54.2	32.3
6 or More	51.9	62.2	47.7	44.2

Institutional Connections by Race
Poor Family Respondents
Boston 1989

INSTITUTION	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Not Member, Church/ Temple/Mosque	39.8	42.2	29.2
Not Familiar with Community Group	69.0	71.7	83.9
Not Familiar with Community Group To Help Child	44.5	51.5	57.9

Organization Named
By Those Who Knew an Organization
All Respondents
Boston 1989

GROUP OR ORGANIZATION NAMED BY RESPONDENT WHO KNEW A GROUP	% of POOR	% of NON-POOR
Courts	1.4	0.4
Other Public Organization	1.7	4.1
Police	2.7	1.7
Telephone Hotline	2.8	4.0
School	8.3	6.7
Dept. of Youth Services/ Welfare/Social Services	11.3	10.3
Private Organization (e.g. YMCA, Boys Club)	14.0	30.1
Community Organization	15.3	18.6
Health Organization		
Multi-Service Center	22.7	16.0
Church/Temple/Mosque	42.3	40.3

School Enrollment Children Ages 6 to 17 Boston 1989

Children in Poor Families

ENROLLMENT	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Public Schools Only	79.6	55.3	83.1	89.4
Non-Boston Public Schools	1.4	3.4	1.3	0.0
Private or Religious	7.2	23.8	1.3	3.5
Mixed: Public, Private or Religious**	5.6	10.5	5.2	0.2
No Record of Enrollment	5.4	6.4	7.2	3.8

Children in Non-Poor Families

ENROLLMENT	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Public* Schools Only	53.5	41.3	71.7	62.3
Private or Religious	35.8	48.9	17.3	29.4
Mixed: Public, Private or Religious**	6.1	8.1	5.6	0.0
No Record of Enrollment	4.6	0.7	5.4	8.2

*Includes Boston and Non-Boston Schools

**More than one child enrolled in different schools

Perceived Quality of Public Schools, K-12 Boston 1989

All Respondents

QUALITY	% RESPONSE
Excellent	18.3
Very Good	22.9
Good	32.1
Fair	17.3
Poor	9.1

By Race

QUALITY	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Excellent or Very Good	48.6	39.1	27.9
Good	26.4	31.5	50.3
Fair or Poor	25.0	29.4	21.8

*Sample limited to those parents whose children attend the Boston Public Schools exclusively

Perceived Quality of Public Schools, K-12 Boston 1989

*Poor Respondents**

QUALITY	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Had Private Conference SAY THAT SCHOOLS ARE:	58.7	77.8	58.3	55.6
Excellent	16.4	6.1	20.8	10.2
Very Good	16.0	26.0	12.6	16.2
Good	33.3	17.6	28.4	49.4
Fair	22.3	17.3	27.5	17.1
Poor	12.0	33.0	10.8	7.1

*Non-Poor Respondents**

SAY THAT SCHOOLS ARE:	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Excellent	19.3	24.4	16.4	14.2
Very Good	26.1	27.2	25.1	17.3
Good	31.7	27.8	32.5	47.2
Fair	15.1	10.1	22.3	4.1
Poor	7.8	10.5	3.8	17.3

*Sample limited to those parents whose children attend the Boston Public Schools exclusively

Perceived Quality of Private Schools, K-12 Boston 1989

Non-Poor Respondents

QUALITY	% of TOTAL	% of WHITE	% of BLACK	% of HISPANIC
Excellent	36.8	41.3	29.2	*
Very Good	39.5	42.3	24.9	*
Good	15.8	10.3	38.7	*
Fair	3.9	3.6	4.4	*
Poor	2.3	2.6	2.8	*

*Insufficient Sample Set

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